

The Greatness of Our Salvation

1 Peter 1:10-12

60-9

Tonight we're going to be looking now to 1 Peter in our study, and what a joy it is to come again to this wonderful letter written by the dear apostle whom we love so much, Peter. We come to verses 10-12 as he begins really opening up his heart in this wonderful epistle. And if I were to give a title to these three brief verses, I would call them "The Greatness of Our Salvation." That seems to me to be his theme, the greatness of our salvation.

Beginning in verse 10 Peter writes, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look."

As Peter begins his letter the reality of salvation is on his heart. He mentioned it in verse 5. He mentioned it, as I just noted, in verse 9. He mentions it again in verse 10. He is writing, remember, to some persecuted, scattered, rejected, hated, despised Christians who he calls in verse 1 "aliens scattered." They are living in a hostile world. They have been blamed for the burning of Rome and persecution is mounting against them. And Peter, in this opening section of chapter 1, is really saying no matter how difficult it is, no matter how severe the persecution, no matter how painful the rejection, you can always look ahead to the salvation of your souls.

Way back in verse 1, he implied that you may be rejected by the world but you are chosen by God. You may be cursed by the world, verse 3, but you have been blessed by God who is to be blessed. And so no matter how difficult it is, he wants his readers to focus on the salvation of their souls, that full final rescue from sin, Satan, death, and hell which God has graciously chosen to give to them through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter is celebrating salvation. And sometimes for Christians through the history of the church there has been little else to celebrate. And Peter is reminding them no matter how bad it gets, no matter how deprived you are, you always have the hope of your eternal salvation. And in that you can be comforted.

Salvation. What a word. Is there any word in the English language as blessed as that one? Is there any word in the English language as hopeful as that one? Is there any word in the English language as comforting as that one, as securing, as assuring? I think not. Salvation, spiritual salvation, the rescue of the human soul from sin and death and hell and Satan, the greatest theme of Scripture.

You know what the Bible says. Man is guilty of sin. Because he is guilty of sin, he is headed for eternal judgment to spend eternity in the torment of hell. He desperately needs to be rescued from that. He needs to be saved, to be delivered. And he can't save himself. The Bible makes it very clear that by his own works, and his own deeds, and his own effort he cannot save himself, he cannot rescue himself, he cannot deliver himself. But the message of the Bible is that while man cannot save himself from eternal torment as a punishment for his sin, God can and will save him.

The Bible tells us that God loves the sinner. God commended His love toward us and that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:8. God not only loves the sinner but God is able to rescue sinners. Psalm 3:8, wonderful statement, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." He has the power to do that. Not only does God love the sinner, and not only is God able to rescue the sinner, but God is willing to rescue the sinner. "God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved."

Furthermore, God has planned to rescue the sinner. Second Timothy 1:9, "He saved us according to His own purpose." God loves the sinner. God is willing to rescue the sinner. He is able to rescue the sinner. He has planned to rescue the sinner. And God has made Christ the means of rescuing the sinner. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation." Christ is the means of salvation.

And then God has also ordained preachers to announce that Christ is the means of salvation. God has the rescue plan in motion. He loves the sinner. He is able to rescue the sinner. He is willing to rescue the sinner. He has planned to rescue the sinner. He has made Christ the means of rescuing the sinner. And He has ordained preachers to announce the rescue plan and to call sinners to Himself, to call sinners to repentance.

So, we should praise the Lord, shouldn't we, for what He has done, for the salvation that He has provided by His sovereign choice as noted back in verses 1 and 2. What a glorious gift we have from God in our eternal salvation. The sad thing about it is that if we're not careful we will lose the sense of gratitude. Someone who said, "Familiarity breeds contempt," was right. And we should never lose that heart of joy over our salvation but it's easy to do that.

In 1 Chronicles 16:23 there's a good reminder. "Sing to the Lord, proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day." That's wisdom. Sing to the Lord and proclaim the good news of His salvation every day, if for no other reason so you don't forget, so you don't grow cold to the reality of the greatness of your salvation.

In Psalm 96:2 you have that very same statement repeated, "Sing to the Lord - " and then it's added " - Bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day." A constant heart of praise for our salvation will cultivate our memory.

Peter wants to call his readers and us to remember the greatness of our salvation, to worship God, to adore God, to thank God for the privilege of being so favored as to have been saved eternally. He has already mentioned back in verses 3-4 - you might look at it - that we have "a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead which provides for us an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading and permanently reserved for us in heaven." And that should be the greatest source of joy in the midst of our sufferings. No matter how bad it gets, verse 8 says, we should "greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory because we know we will obtain the salvation

of our souls.”

This is a good reminder. No matter what happens in life we focus on salvation. When everything in life isn't the way we would like it, we go back to this point, the blessedness of our eternal salvation. That's his theme.

Now in these three verses - you're going to find this fascinating - he approaches the greatness of salvation or the blessedness of salvation in a most unusual way. If I were sitting down to write this little section on the greatness of salvation, I would never have approached it this way. I probably would have talked about the fact that salvation is great because of the great God who gave it. Salvation is great because of the great Savior who purchased it. Salvation is great because of the great difference, change, dramatic alteration, and so forth in life that it produces. I would have focused on God's plan, Christ's work, the transformation of a person's life and thereby demonstrated the greatness of salvation.

But the Holy Spirit doesn't do that. Rather than looking - and mark this because you'll need to get this or you'll miss the intent of the passage - rather than looking at salvation's greatness through the eyes of the recipient, He looks at the greatness of salvation through the eyes of the agents who brought it. He doesn't look at the greatness of salvation from our viewpoint, but from the viewpoint of four very key persons: One, Old Testament prophets who proclaimed the message; two, the Holy Spirit who inspired the message; three, the New Testament apostles who were the gospel preachers; and four, the angels. And He demonstrates the greatness of salvation by how the prophets viewed it, how the Spirit viewed it, how the apostles viewed it and how the angels view it. What a fascinating approach. Not how we view it, but how the agents that brought that message view it.

So we can say, then, four things to follow. Salvation was the theme of the prophets' study, it was the theme of the Spirit's inspiration, it was the theme of the apostles' testimony, and it was the theme of the angels' interest. This is so rich, so rich. And the very fact that the Old Testament prophets were so interested in it, that the Spirit was so interested in it, that the New Testament apostles were so interested in it, that the angels were so interested in it speaks of its greatness. There would have been a lot of things for the prophets to be interested in, plenty of things for the Spirit to be interested in, plenty of things for the New Testament apostles and the angels, but this was the heart of their interest.

Let's look, first of all, at the theme of the prophets' study in verse 10 and the first part of verse 11. And remember now, what Peter wants to do is to have us understand how great our salvation is so that no matter what else may be falling apart around us, we hold onto that eternal salvation of our souls, which is so surpassing in its greatness. The first testimony, then, comes from the prophets. And he begins in verse 10, "As to this salvation - " the salvation of our souls just mentioned " - the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time - " stop at that point.

Now he's talking about the prophets here, the Old Testament prophets. And he says they "who prophesied of the grace that *would come* - " the salvation to come " - made careful search and inquiry into those prophecies, trying to determine what person or time was involved." They literally studied their own prophetic writings to know all they could about the promised salvation.

Now think of it, of all the truth that they might of studied, why would they be so preoccupied with this? Because this is the greatest theme in the universe, the salvation that God has provided for sinners. At this particular point in time and on this little theater called earth, this is the greatest theme. Of all the truth that they received in their divine revelation to speak and write down, this was their passion. They wanted to understand salvation. This was the pursuit of the Old Testament prophets.

Now some of the detail as to this salvation, he says, and there's no article here in the original text, just a general reference, "prophets who prophesied." From Moses to Malachi, all those Old Testament prophets who spoke for God had their gaze on salvation. They were really fascinated by the promises of salvation. You say, "Well, weren't they recipients of salvation?" Yes. But even though they received salvation - mark this - they received it not having fully seen its accomplishment. You understand that?

They received the gift of salvation without ever seeing or knowing the Savior, Jesus Christ. They received the gift of salvation without ever seeing or fully understanding all that was involved in His life, and His death, and His resurrection. They received a salvation, in a sense, without the full benefit of seeing the accomplishment of that salvation.

But there was more to it than that. Because in their prophecies the promise of God was that this salvation to come was a salvation that would go beyond Israel to all the nations of the earth. That was the mystery of it. That was the uniqueness of it. So they knew that God had revealed a future great redemption plan, not only for Israel, but for the world, and that that redemption and deliverance would be brought by the promised Messiah, the prophet priest/king who was to come, they knew it was future, the grace that would come, and they wanted to better understand it. They were fascinated by it.

Notice that little phrase "of the grace that would come." The subject of their intense study was grace. That word "grace" is a bigger word than salvation. Salvation speaks about the act of saving. Grace speaks about the motive and it embraces all of God's motive behind His saving work. So grace really encompasses salvation, but is a bigger term. They were fascinated to study the grace of God, God's undeserved blessing, unearned favor, forgiving goodness toward sinners. They were fascinated to know that God had promised a salvation by grace that would embrace the world.

Now let me hasten to add, beloved, you must not think that because it says they "prophesied of the grace that would come," that there was no grace in the Old Testament. That is a terrible error to make and many people make that error, assuming that the Old Testament was all law and no grace. That is not true. God - listen to this - God by nature is gracious, is that true? God by nature is gracious. The same God who is gracious in our age was gracious in that age because that's who He is.

God is not in process, in spite of what process theology tells us. God has always been unchangeably the same and always unchangeably gracious. He was gracious in the Old Testament economy. He is gracious in the New Testament economy. God is gracious, period. And as long there has been God - and that's eternal - and as long as there will be God - and that's eternal - He is gracious.

Back in Genesis, the very first book in the Bible, Joseph lifted up his eyes, saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son said, "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me? He says, May God

be gracious to you, my son.” The patriarchs were fully aware of the grace of God. They knew that. In Exodus 22:27 - back in verse 26 we start, “If you ever take - ” this is God giving them the law “ - take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return to him before the sun sets. That’s his only covering, it’s his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it will come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear *him* - ” God says “ - for I am gracious.” God has always been gracious.

In Exodus 33 you remember Moses was having a vision of God. And in 33:19 we read, God said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” Those are a few samples taken right out of the first two books of the Old Testament. God has always been gracious.

The Psalms are replete with statements about the grace of God. The prophets knew that God was gracious. The very fact that He did not consume them in their sin was an indication of His grace. Jonah, for example, the prophet, Jonah chapter 4 prayed to the Lord, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God.” You know why Jonah ran from God? He was afraid to preach to the Ninevites. Do you know why? Because he thought God would save them. And he couldn’t stand the idea of Gentiles getting saved. It was repulsive to him. So he ran because he knew God was gracious.

There was never any question in the Old Testament about whether God was gracious, He’s always been who He is. But there was a surpassing grace to come. There was a greater grace to come than they had even seen in Nineveh, or in Israel. There was a grace that went way beyond anything they had assumed. For example, Isaiah the prophet prophesied of it in 45:20. Listen to what Isaiah says from the Lord. “Gather yourselves and come, draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, who carry about their wooden idol and pray to a god who cannot save. Declare and set forth *your* case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God beside Me, a righteous God and a Savior;”

Here is Isaiah saying God is announcing He’s a Savior to all the nations. “There is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness, and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, and every tongue will swear *allegiance*. And they will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him.”

Absolutely incredible. Isaiah is predicting that every nation will bow the knee to God, that they will enter into a salvation, a gracious salvation. They hadn’t yet seen that come to pass. They knew that was tied in to the Messiah.

In Isaiah 55:1-7, listen to what Isaiah says. “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;” That’s a free invitation to every one of every nation. “And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money, without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, - ” why do you follow false gods? He’s saying. “ - and your wages for what doesn’t satisfy? Listen careful to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *according to* the faithful mercies shown to David. Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, - ” the nations “ -

a leader and a commander for the peoples. Behold, you will all a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will turn to you, because of the Lord your God, even the holy one of Israel.”

God says everybody can come. And then He says that nations are going to come, and people who were not His people will become His people, Gentiles, Gentiles.

So that's what you need to understand. The prophets were writing about a salvation grace to come that was far larger than anything they had experienced. They were writing about the Messiah, who would bring a salvation that would touch the world.

Their prophecies had several basic facts. I can only just touch them lightly because of time. But when they prophesied about the Messiah and the grace of salvation, they prophesied first that the Messiah would suffer. Psalm 22 details His crucifixion, Isaiah 53 details His suffering.

Secondly, they prophesied that Messiah would triumph. The Psalms that says God will not leave His Holy One to see corruption. Psalm 2, that He would “set His King on His holy hill,” He would rule “with a rod of iron” and a scepter. Isaiah 9 said that “the government would be on His shoulder” and He would be “the mighty God.” So the prophets prophesied a Messiah that would suffer and a Messiah that would triumph.

Thirdly, they prophesied a Messiah that would save, a Messiah that would save. That would bind up the broken-hearted, that would bring salvation to the ends of the earth. That is why Jesus, when He went to the synagogue in Nazareth and was given the book of the law of the Old Testament, opened it up and read right out of Isaiah chapter 61 these words, “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He's anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are down trodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” That's a Messianic prophecy of the coming Savior who would save. And then He closed the book and He said, “Today the Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” So the Old Testament prophets said He will suffer, He will triumph, He will save.

Perhaps a good an illustration of the content of the Old Testament prophets' message as any is given in Romans by Paul as Paul quotes some of these prophets. Look at Romans 9, we're just going to touch very briefly on this, Romans 9:25. This is so good, so rich. And here Paul is, of course, making an argument for salvation. It's a part of his whole sweeping discussion of salvation. And here he talks about the fact that the Old Testament prophets saw Gentile salvation. Verse 24 mentions that people would be called from among the Gentiles.

And then it says, “As he says also in Hosea - ” the Old Testament prophet “ - I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'beloved.' And it shall be in that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God.” Isn't that wonderful? There's Hosea the prophet predicting a grace that will come, a salvation that will embrace the Gentiles.

Go to 9:33. It says, “I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” And again the qualifying element is not a nation, not Israel, but anyone who believes.

Then in would you please notice 10:11, and here he quotes out of Isaiah 28:16, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." The same statement as at the end of chapter 9. A universal salvation for anyone who believes. Look at 10:13. Verse 13 is quoted out of Joel chapter 2. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." And then down to verse 20, and verse 20 he is quoting out of Isaiah 65. "I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me." And that's Gentile salvation. On the other hand, "I tried all day long to reach My people and they were disobedient and obstinate."

Go to chapter 15 for a final thought. And here again, and Paul is talking about God's grace in salvation to the Gentiles, and he quotes again in verse 9 here out of the Old Testament. He says, "For the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written." And he quotes out of Psalm 18:49, "Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Thy name." And then verse 10, again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people." That's taken from the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 32. Moses the prophet said that. Then verse 12. Verse 12 comes out of Isaiah, "There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope."

So you get the picture. Gentile salvation. Over in verse 21, "They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand." Taken again from Isaiah 52.

Now notice what Paul is doing. All of those prophecies, whether it's Moses, or Joel, or Hosea, or Isaiah, they were all predicting a grace that would come that was surpassing anything they had experienced. The Messiah would come and save not just the Jew, but the nations. And so Paul in Romans as he writes about the salvation that is come in Christ goes back and picks out choice prophecies and says, "That is now fulfilled." In Christ is the grace the prophets wrote of.

But here's the point. When they wrote of it they didn't have Romans. When they wrote of it Christ hadn't been born, or died, or risen. When they wrote of it, the church had not been born so there was not one body, Jew and Gentile, with the middle wall broken down, there was not a surpassing grace that had extended around the world.

But so deep and pervasive was their desire to understand that marvelous prophecy that he says, back to verse 10, "The prophets made careful search and inquiry into it." They studied their own writings. They studied their own writings. They knew they were prophesying of grace that would come to you - those little words "to you," very important. They knew they were writing about a future generation, not to them but to someone in the future. And it was so fascinating to them to study about the Messiah, and about His suffering, and about His triumph, and about His salvation, and about the world coming to God that they made careful search and inquiry.

Those two words I don't think we can split up their meaning and say they each mean something very distinct. They really mean the same thing, it's just enriching the idea by including two words. They diligently studied their own writings. They dug into their own writings and the writings of the other prophets to better understand salvation.

Now what am I saying here? What's Peter saying? Listen, this is what he's saying. Salvation was so marvelous a reality that even the Old Testament prophets spent their time trying to understand its

wonders. That's how great it is. That's how wonderful it is. Of all the things they might have searched out, this was what they chose to search out.

Peter's heart is revealed here, to see the greatness of salvation. Just note how the prophets wanted to understand it. The godly men of the Old Testament era, the choice servants of God who wrote the Scripture were in love with the concept of salvation. The reality of salvation history in Christ consumed their hearts. They made careful search. That's a very intense word, *ekzēteō*, a preposition always intensifies the verb. They sought it out diligently. They made inquiry, another compound term, *exeraunaō*, to search out diligently, intensely. Because they didn't fully understand. They couldn't understand.

How could they understand? Christ hadn't come. He hadn't lived. He hadn't taught. He hadn't died. He hadn't risen. The prophets didn't understand. They didn't understand a lot of things. In Isaiah 6:11, Isaiah says, "Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' " And in a sense he's admitting, "I wish I understood this." Habakkuk in chapter 1 says, "Lord, how long are you going to allow this abuse of Your people to go on?" There were a lot of things they didn't understand, a lot of things they could have studied, a lot of things they could have looked into, a lot of things that must have been of tremendous interest to them.

Daniel 7:15, "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. And so I approached one of those who was standing by - " an angel " - and asked him the exact meaning of all this." He didn't understand it. The angel unfolded some of it to him. So you see, those prophets had an interesting dilemma. They were living so far on the other side of the cross and the work of Christ there was no way they could understand it all. There was no way they could absorb it all, no way they could see it clearly.

Listen to Matthew 13:17, the words of Jesus, "For truly I say to you - " He said this to His disciples " - that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*." They were limited. They were limited. And so they studied their own writings, and what did they study? The Messiah and the salvation that He would bring. It was not just scholarly investigation, it was a passionate driving compulsion to understand the greatness of salvation.

Footnote. Some have suggested in this passage that this reflects upon an attitude of the prophets before they had received any prophecies. Some have suggested that they wanted so much to understand that God gave them the prophecies about Messiah. And that what you have here is they are making careful search and inquiry about truth that as yet is not revealed. And so they sought to understand before they received the Word of God, then God gave them the Word so they would understand.

I don't believe that that at all reflects the text, that view. It is much more faithful to the text to understand that they must have first had some revelation or what would they have searched? What would they have inquired into? And the truth of it is if they hadn't had any revelation about a future grace to come in Messiah, they wouldn't have had any question to ask, because you don't ask questions about something you don't know exists. No.

Furthermore, God doesn't give revelation to people who beg for it. He chooses His prophets. And He

didn't give them revelation just because they were curious. I've been curious about a lot of things and I haven't gotten a revelation yet. That's not how it works. And furthermore, because verse 11 says exactly what they were interested in and it wasn't the doctrine of salvation, it wasn't the doctrine of Messiah, it wasn't whether Messiah would suffer and triumph and save. What they wanted to know is what person was the Messiah and what time would He come. Very specific. They had enough revelation to have their interest aroused. They were not looking for prophecy to come, they were looking to understand the prophecy that had already come.

And what did they want to know? Verse 11, "Seeking to know - " *eraunaō*, literally translated "searching," searching to know, " - searching to understand what person and what time." Who and when. Now that's understandable, isn't it? If you were an Old Testament prophet and you had all this incredible information, wouldn't you be wondering who is this Messiah? Who will it be? Who will it be? There are some Jews still wondering that. Who will it be? And when will He come? And when will He come? Who is the Messiah and when is He coming?

What person will bring this salvation? Who will be the Savior, judge, king, prophet, priest? Who will be the Messiah? And what *kairos*, what season, what era, what epoch? Who is the last Old Testament prophet? Who was the last Old Testament prophet? John the Baptist. Let me give you an insight. Look at Matthew 11. John the Baptist is a classic illustration of this attitude among the prophets.

You know the thing John wanted to know more than anything else - the thing he wanted to know most of all? Who is the Messiah? He was in the line of the prophet. They all wanted to know that. He was no different. "It came about - " verse 1 of Matthew 11 " - Jesus finished giving instruction to the twelve, departed from there to teach and preach in the cities. And when John was in prison, he heard the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples." The disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and they said this, "Are you the expected one?" That's always the questions the prophets were asking. Who? "Or shall we look for someone else?" Are you the one and is this the time or is it somebody else at another time? That's what he wanted to know.

See, John's disciples were aware of Jesus' ministry, according to 9:14. And they had reported to John the Baptist what Jesus was doing, according to Luke 7:11-18. And John is now curious. He wants to know. He wants to know what all the prophets wanted to know: Who and when? Is this the time and is this the man? Are you the coming one? Are you the expected one? By the way, one of the most common titles for Messiah, the expected one, the coming one. Because they were all looking and waiting. Or are we to look for another?

In response, Jesus gave him His credentials. He said, "You go tell John this: tell him *the* blind received their sight, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them." Tell him that. You say, "Why do you want to tell him that?" Because every bit of that fulfills Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah, and if you tell him that he'll know. He'll know.

So the Old Testament prophets - including John - looked into their own writings, their own prophecies to make sure. And don't forget this, John had already said about Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," and even though God inspired him to say that, he was still wondering what that meant, still looking into his own prophecy, and wanting to ascertain if indeed this was the time and this was the person.

And Peter's point is how great is salvation if it's the preoccupying study of all the prophets. If they're so concerned about it, so thrilled with it, so desirous of plunging deep into its truths and fully understanding it, and then how precious should it be to us, right? Do you realize that generation after generation, and century after century, those godly men sought to know what you and I take for granted? You understand that? And sometimes slough off? It was the theme of the prophets' study, that's how precious it is.

Second point - and the next couple of points are shorter than the first one, so relax. The second one is that the great salvation of which Peter writes is the theme of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Not only were the prophets committed to this, but so is the Holy Spirit. And Peter gives us a crucial insight into the fact that all revelation was divinely revealed by the Holy Spirit, and the greatness of our salvation is seen in the fact that it was the theme of the Holy Spirit's revelation.

Listen, everything the prophets received they received from whom? The Holy Spirit. Everything the New Testament writers received they received from the Holy Spirit. Everything we read we read what the Spirit said. Back to verse 11, they "sought to know what person or time - " here's the key " - the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories to follow."

Peter introduces to us, then, the idea that these prophets were really wanting to understand the person and the time that the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted through them the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

Now the prophecies that they wrote had those two elements: The sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow. You go into the Old Testament, read Psalm 22, it's all about the suffering of Christ. Read psalm 69:1-21, it's about the suffering of Christ. Read Isaiah 52:13 to 53:10 or so, all about the sufferings of Christ. Read Daniel 9:24-26, the sufferings of Christ, the Messiah will be cut off. Read Zechariah 12:10, He'll be pierced, Zechariah 13:7, more about the sufferings of Christ. They wrote about the sufferings of Christ under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They wouldn't have known that apart from the Spirit, would they? They couldn't read the future. They couldn't even understand what they did write, let alone try to figure out to write something on their own. And then he says they wrote about "the glories to follow." What does that mean? The resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the enthronement of Christ.

They wrote about the child who would become the king and the government would be upon His shoulder, Isaiah 9. They wrote in Daniel 2 about the one who would be the ultimate King and Daniel 7, and Zechariah 2, and Zechariah 14. The prophets wrote about the glory, and they wrote about the suffering, but all of it was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

By the way, the sufferings of Christ and the glories of Christ are the major themes of Old Testament prophecy. Revelation 19:10 says, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," so all prophecy is really geared to testify to Christ. And in testifying to Christ, it focused primarily on His suffering and His glory, which allowed Him to become the Savior. In Luke 24, Jesus said on the road to Emmaus to those disciples, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" And what did the prophets speak? "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to

enter in to His glory?" Suffering, glory, suffering, glory, always the theme, always the theme. That theme was the theme of the prophets' study because it was the theme of the Spirit's inspiration.

And so it says the spirit of Christ - by the way, that shows that Christ preexisted before His incarnation in a spirit form. Notice the little phrase "in them" or "within them." The Spirit took up residence within the writers of the Old Testament. That's why 2 Peter 1:21 says, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will - " listen to this " - but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The word "moved," carried along by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21, one of the most important verses in the New Testament.

The resident Spirit in them inspired them to write about the glorious salvation that was to come. The word "indicating," do you see it there? The Spirit of Christ was in them indicating, or some Bibles may say "witnessing," *promarturomenon* means to "witness beforehand, to forewitness." So here was the Spirit inspiring them, testifying to a future salvation so that what they wrote, as 2 Timothy 3:16 puts it, was "God-breathed," God breathed.

Verse 12, by the way, notice it also affirms this. Down toward the end of the verse, it says that the New Testament apostles preached the gospel to you "by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven." So the Holy Spirit inspired not only the Old Testament writers, but the New Testament apostles, as well. So both Old Testament and New Testament are the breath of the Spirit of God, divine origin.

So the Holy Spirit revealed this great salvation to that generation. Verse 12 says "it was revealed to them - " it was revealed to them, that is to the Old Testament prophets, follow this " - that they were not serving themselves - " that this whole message was not for their generation, not for their time. That's so important.

Can I just take a moment and remind you of a verse you probably never read or thought about? You may have read by it, but not thought about it. Numbers 24:17. Listen, just listen to it. "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel - " but not now and not near. Way back in the Pentateuch, already the Spirit of God beginning to testify about the coming Messiah. And they weren't speaking about their age and their time.

In Hebrews 11 we get a little more insight, Hebrews 11:13 says, "All these died in faith, - " all the patriarchs " - without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance." That's right. They could only see it from a distance. And then at the end of that 11th chapter, those final two marvelous verses, 39 and 40, "And all these - " all these Old Testament heroes that have been named in this chapter " - having gained approval through their faith - " listen " - did not receive what was promised." They didn't. It wasn't for their age. "Because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect." It wasn't for their time, it was for us.

Now the point here is not that the prophecies had no value. They had immense value. But only that the fulfillment of the prophecies was not for that generation, but a future generation which would come to pass, and that ultimately there would come a time and a generation where salvation would be accomplished and Gentiles would be involved in covenant blessing from the work of Messiah.

So the prophets saw the Messiah, they saw the grace to come, they saw the salvation, but they

didn't know who, and they didn't know when, but it was revealed to them, it wasn't in their generation. And Peter tells us that all of this was the testimony of the Holy Spirit. How great is salvation that it is not only the theme of prophets' study, but the theme of Spirit inspiration.

Third point - brief one - it is the theme of the apostles' proclamation. Verse 12 again, it says, "In these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven." And that statement simply brings in the New Testament apostles. "These things - " that is the salvation grace which is to come, the suffering and glory of Messiah, everything the Spirit inspired in the Old Testament writers " - now have been announced to you through those who preach the gospel to you." Those are the New Testament preachers.

"In these things" refers directly to the who and the when. "In these things," the who, what person and the when, what time are now preached to you. And isn't that what the New Testament preachers did? Didn't they come along and say, "The Messiah is Jesus Christ and the time is - " what? " - now?" Doesn't Paul say, "Behold now is the acceptable time, today is the - " what? " - day of salvation?" It is come, it is here. It is here.

"In these things," who and when, the details of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ are fulfilled, " - they have been announced to you through those who preach the gospel." Who's that? Luke, Paul, Barnabas, Philip, John, the apostles. They preached it. In fact, Paul said, "I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him - " what? " - crucified." And why did he preach only that? Only Christ and Christ crucified and salvation in Christ, why was he ready to preach the gospel at ever turn? Why was he not ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Why? "Because it was the preaching of the cross that was to them that perish foolishness, but unto us that believe eternal life."

That was their message. The apostolic preaching of the cross was the message. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2, "I didn't come to you with human wisdom. I didn't come to you with philosophy. I came to you with the cross, determined to know nothing except Christ and Him crucified."

So, that which occupied the constant study of the prophets, that which occupied the constant inspiration of the Spirit, also became the constant theme of the New Testament preachers. And how much were they devoted to it? Listen, beloved, they died for it, didn't they? They died for it. They gave their life for it. That's how great salvation is. The theme of prophets' study, the theme of Spirit inspiration, the theme of apostolic testimony.

And finally, the theme of the angels' interest. I love this. He just throws this in in verse 12, "Things into which angels long to look." Ever wished you were an angel? When I was a little kid I used to think, "Boy, wouldn't it be neat to be an angel? Just fly, you know, and be good all the time. Be an angel, sneak up on people and do good things, be in the presence of God."

Oh, have you ever wondered what it would be like to be an angel? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to see what angels see in that dimension that we can't perceive, that spiritual dimension that is not visible to us? Have you ever wondered what it's like for angels to battle demons in that sphere that's a mystery to us? That invisible world that's just as real as ours, only not able to be seen with the physical eye? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a part of that angelic world and to experience that eternal holiness that holy angels have?

I've got news for you. The angels are saying the same thing. "I wonder what it's like to be saved. I wonder what it's like to receive grace. I wonder what it's like to be forgiven," fascinating. Back to verse 12 at the end, "things," what do you mean things? Matters of salvation into which angels long to look.

Those two words, "long to look," loaded with meaning. You know what the word "long" is? Get this one – *epithumeō*. You know what that word means? To lust in a negative sense. It's describing a strong desire, an overpowering impulse. This isn't whimsical. The angels aren't saying, "Oh, by the way, wouldn't it be interesting to see what salvation's like?" This is a passion with them. This is strong impulse. The term in the form *epithumousin* here, the term basically means an impulse that's not satisfied, a desire that's not fulfilled. And the angels have this unsatisfied desire to look into the things of salvation.

To look - wonderful word. Do you know what it literally means? "To stretch forward your head, or to bend down." It's used to describe what Peter and John did at the tomb. You remember when they ran and stooped down and looked in? Same verb. The angels want to stoop down, get down here, and look into this thing. They have a driving passion to understand it. Why? Because they'll never experience it.

The holy angels never need to be saved, the fallen angels can't be saved. The holy angels are stooping down to peer into the reality of salvation in the human world. And I might add to you that maybe, too, there are some fallen angels who are wanting to look into salvation in the hope that they might receive it, but they never will. They never will.

Angels have been involved, the holy angels have been involved in salvation. The holy angels announced Christ's birth. The holy angels ministered Him in His temptation. They served there at the resurrection. They attended to His ascension. They are now doing His bidding on behalf of the saints. The fallen angels were around. They were attacking Him in His temptation. They were besieging Him in His life. They were trying to kill Him and keep Him dead on the cross. They were trying to keep Him in the grave. They have assaulted His work and His church.

The angels holy and fallen have been around the work of salvation, none of them will ever experience it. The holy angels don't need it. The fallen angels can't have it. But they have a powerful desire to look more deeply into the immense, miraculous, gracious salvation which they will never experience.

I think the holy angels are most in mind here. I just offer that other option as a possible thought. And I think the holy angels want to look into it for the reason that they might understand it better, for the reason that they might glorify God more, because that's what they exist to do. It's not just sheer curiosity. It is to enable them to give God greater glory.

God has displayed His church to them. You remember in Luke 15 when the sinner comes back, it says that the angels of heaven do what? Rejoice. The angels rejoice and praise God for saving a sinner. In 1 Corinthians, I think it's in 4:9, Paul says, "God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." The angels are watching Paul. They're watching the apostle Paul. They're seeing the power of God in his life. In Ephesians 3:10 it says, "That the manifold wisdom of God might now be made

known through the church, to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies.” God is putting His grace in the church on display before the angels. They’re watching His ministries. They’re watching His church. They’re taking it all in.

They’ll never participate but there’s an interesting, interesting thing in Revelation chapter 5. Listen to this. It says, “The Lamb took the book - ” that’s the title deed to the earth, the Lord Christ, the Lamb “ - and the four living creatures - ” those are angels “ - and the 24 elders - ” representing the saints “ - fell down before the Lamb, everybody has a harp, golden bowls of incense, the prayers of the saints and they sang a new song.” Now watch this, here’s the song. “Worthy art Thou to take the book and break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and did purchase for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

Isn’t that a wonderful song? Can you sing that song? Can you sing the song of redemption? Sure, you’ve been redeemed. But look at this, verse 11, “I looked, I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and myriads and myriads and thousands of thousands, and they all said, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power.’ ” The angels are chiming in on redemption song even though they haven’t experienced it. We’re the ones that really know what we’re singing. They have seen it as observers, and they want to see it as observers, and they want to look into it so that they might join in the redemption song and give God glory.

Isn’t that a beautiful thought? What a salvation. So Peter says, “Look, no matter what your trials are, no matter what your difficulties are, remember the greatness of your salvation, a salvation which the prophets studied, which the Spirit inspired, to which the apostles give testimony, and which is the ongoing interest of the angels themselves.”

Can I ask you a question? Is your salvation that precious to you? Or have you left your first love? It’s a fair question. It was precious to you at first, wasn’t it? Your first love, when you first were saved. Oh it was great. How is it now? Have you lost sight of it? Let that be rekindled in your heart.

You say, “How?” Well, the church at Ephesus had left its first love was instructed to do this: Go back and do the first works. Go back and start to live the way you lived right after you were saved, with that hot heart, that zealous testimony, that exhilarating love for God, that sense of hunger for the Word, that desire for Christian fellowship, that love of prayer, the first works. If you’ve left the first love, go back and do the first works. That’s what it says in Revelation 2. And remember again the greatness of your salvation. Let’s pray together.

Father, we’ve taken a long time tonight to unfold this but by compulsion of heart there was no way that we could leave anything unsaid in this powerful overwhelming portion of Scripture. Thank You. Thank You for the gracious salvation which we have and may we exhilarate in it, enjoy it.

Even in the midst of trials, may we never lose our perspective, and know that we have received eternal salvation, so great, so glorious that we will spend forever praising You for it. Thank You is not adequate enough to express our hearts’ cry that you have chosen us for this glorious gift in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).