

A man wrote this letter to a pastor: Eighteen years ago, the Lord blessed my wife and me with a child born with multiple birth defects. When he was born, the doctor came to me and said, "Don't hope, he will not live out the day." I got on my knees and said, "God, I don't know why you sent me this little boy with so many problems – 3½ pounds, three months premature, only a portion of a left leg, a malformed right hand, and possible lung damage – but please don't take him back now." That evening when I came to the hospital, the doctor greeted me by saying, "I just examined your son again. I don't believe it's the same boy. I think he's going to make it." My son stayed five weeks in that hospital. He came home and then for years – it was in and out of hospitals for one operation after another. Each time his little stump would grow, the bone would push through the tip of his stump and would have to be sawed off. Seeing the pain that boy went through, I thought I was going insane. I cursed God and turned my back on Him.

I crawled into a bourbon bottle for 15 years. The more I drank, the deeper into hell I went. Sometimes waking up hungover, I would be confronted with horrible things I had done that I didn't even remember doing. One morning, I awoke with a broken right hand and discovered 22 holes in my wall that I had punched. I didn't remember doing it.

One Sunday morning, I laid in bed and reflected on what a lousy husband and father I was, and decided I would take one of my shotguns and stick it in my mouth and pull the trigger. The radio was on, and you were speaking. I had never heard you before. You said that Jesus loved me. It had no impact because I had heard it all before. Only then you said, "The Lord deals in futures." I don't know to this day, why that phrase hit me like a ton of bricks. It saved my life. I started crying and said, "God, if you deal in futures, then take this wretched life and make something of it before I give it to Satan." Of course, God answered.

And my boy? *In the eighth grade, he was third on the east coast in a math competition and received a certificate from our governor and a mini scholarship from John Hopkins University in Baltimore. In his freshman year of high school, he was the number one world geography student in the nation. Today he is a junior in high school and continues to astound us with his brilliance. My lovely wife stayed with me through all the hell I put her through. When I asked her why, she just said, "The Lord deals in futures, and so do I."*

I like that, and if there was anyone who could understand that the Lord deals in futures, it would most certainly be Peter. Some 30 years earlier, Peter had denied Jesus three times, denied he even knew Jesus, and yet, the Lord had a future for Peter – and now we find him writing this letter of encouragement and hope to these

churches in Asia Minor, a letter that reminds them that in the face of their intense persecution and their suffering – the Lord deals in their futures too.

We are still in **1 Peter 1**, and yes, we are moving slowly, just in case you are wondering. If you recall from last week, we discovered that the various trials we all face from time to time are actually tests so we can learn if our faith in God is real – because how we respond to trials and to suffering tells us what we truly believe about God. **Do we really – I mean really trust Him?** We need to see it for ourselves. We need to know if our faith in God is genuine or not, because the outcome of our faith is – our salvation.

This morning we are going to continue with the topic of salvation, so turn with me to **1 Peter 1:10-12**.

¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

Peter begins this passage by stating, “**as to this salvation**” which tells us our passage this morning is about salvation – the same gracious salvation that Peter has been describing in his letter – a salvation that is grounded by faith in Jesus Christ, a salvation which includes an inheritance that is kept for us in heaven, and it’s a salvation that protects the believer by the power of God on this side of heaven.

It’s a salvation that is described in a simple and clear gospel message – that because of our sin, we were separated from a holy and loving God, we were lost and alienated from Him, so God took the initiative and graciously reached out in love to bring us back to Himself through the finished work of Jesus Christ. **Isn’t this what John 3:16 tells us?**

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

It’s a simple and clear gospel message, but for the Old Testament prophets, who first announced this gracious salvation – it was a different story – it was somewhat of a head scratcher for them, and let me explain.

Old Testament prophets had one main function – they proclaimed what had been revealed to them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, what was

revealed to them pertained to current circumstances, but at other times, they were inspired to prophesy about future events. In this passage, Peter is focused on the future events, explaining that centuries before Jesus was born, these prophets spoke *about* Him; even though, they didn't fully understand what had been revealed *to* them. These prophets could only see glimpses of God's salvation by grace, it was both amazing and mysterious to them, and they wanted to know more, so they thought about it, they asked about it, and they thoroughly researched and explored this subject best they could in an attempt to understand what and who they were actually prophesying about. They didn't have the complete picture like we do – we might say they were only given bits and pieces of it, but be that may, listen to some of the prophecies these Old Testament prophets were proclaiming under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Some 800 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah proclaimed,

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

This is found in **Micah 5:2**, and we know that Jesus was later born in Bethlehem. Around the same time period that Micah was prophesying, the prophet Isaiah was working as well. In **Isaiah 7:14**, he said,

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

Here Isaiah points to the human birth and the divine nature of Jesus approximately 700 years before He was born. Born of a virgin, and He would be called ***“Immanuel”*** – meaning *God with us*. We are told this exact same thing in **Matthew 1:22-23**, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Joseph and explained the virgin birth of Jesus through Mary.

But we are not done with Isaiah. Again, some 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah gave us his most well-known prophesy from **Isaiah 53**. Just listen as I begin with **verse 3**, and I'm going to read this from the NIV.

³He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. ⁴Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the

punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.
⁶ *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* ⁷ *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.* ⁸ *By oppression and judgment he was taken away. **Yet who of his generation protested?** For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.* ⁹ *He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.* ¹⁰ *Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.* ¹¹ *After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.* ¹² *Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

That is such a clear picture of the suffering that Jesus experienced on our behalf. While a lost and dying world had gone astray and turned their backs on God, God took the initiative and laid the sin of the world upon Jesus.

And let's not forget Zechariah, where he prophesied about the betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and after Judas returned it, the silver was used to buy the Potter's field as a burial place for strangers. He wrote this in **Zechariah 11:12-13**, about 500 years before Jesus was born.

¹² *I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.* ¹³ *Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.*

Here is what we are later told in **Matthew 27:3-7**.

³ *Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,* ⁴ *saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, **"What is that to us?"** See to that yourself!"* ⁵ *And he threw the pieces of silver*

into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. ⁶ The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.” ⁷ And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers.

Now, before we move back to **1 Peter**, I want to consider the prophesy of a person we typically don’t think of as a prophet – that being David. David provided a prophesy in **Psalm 22** that is amazing, and just so you know, it was written about 1000 years before Jesus was born. Listen to this:

In **verse 1**, David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, begins with these words,

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

Now drop down to **verses 7-8**,

⁷All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, ⁸ “Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”

That’s what the onlookers were saying about Jesus while He hung on the cross – *maybe God will deliver Him*. And finally, in **verses 16-18**, when crucifixion wasn’t even a known means of capital punishment, David wrote:

¹⁶For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; ¹⁸They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Anyone who knows the story of the cross, knows this is a spot-on prophesy. Turn to **Mark 15:24**.

And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take.

All of these prophecies were proclaimed centuries before Jesus was ever born, and this is not exhaustive by any means. There are hundreds of these. These Old Testament prophets proclaimed what was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, they clearly saw the birth, the suffering, and the death of Christ, and understandably,

they were curious as to what He was like, what was the nature of His ministry, and when He was coming.

None of these prophets had all the details like we do, so they wanted to know more, they wanted to learn more, and in their searching for more, they discovered that the One they were prophesying about would have to **suffer** first, and then He would enter into His **glory**.

This is an important point. Before there was a crown, there was a cross. Before there was the resurrection, there was the crucifixion. Before glory, there would be suffering. This is the pattern seen in Jesus – suffering then future glory, and it's the same pattern for the recipients of this letter, and it's the same pattern for you and me as well. It's all part of God's plan. It's part of the Christian experience, and most importantly, it's part of knowing Christ. Listen to what Paul said in **Philippians 3:7-10**:

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The goal of every believer should be to fully know Jesus – to have the closest possible personal relationship with Him, and part of this personal relationship with Him includes our experience with suffering. It is all part of following Jesus and knowing Him. Our suffering, in the here and now, is not a sign that God is angry at us, or He doesn't care about us, or He's not working on our behalf, rather, our suffering is part of knowing Jesus, and it's a sign that future glory is to follow for us.

Now in **verse 12**, Peter shifts his focus from the Old Testament prophets to the New Testament apostles.

¹² 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.

Salvation by grace was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, and it was later preached by the New Testament apostles. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached the gospel message that was revealed to them, having a much fuller understanding of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, because these apostles like Peter personally knew Jesus; whereas, the prophets did not.

Then Peter moves to the topic of angels which I find really interesting in light of our current study through the book of Revelation on Wednesday nights. In Revelation, John describes activities occurring in the throne room of heaven and on the earth, and often times, these activities include angels – lots of angels. As we have seen, angels vary in both appearance and purpose, fully able to carry out God’s commands; however, Peter tells us there is something they cannot do. They cannot experience salvation – they can only marvel at it.

Why would the angels marvel at our salvation? Because salvation is not for them. Jesus died to save people, not the angels. There are God’s angels and there are fallen angels, but there are no “saved” angels. Only people can experience salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and this experience fascinates the angels – in fact, Peter describes them as stooping sideways and standing on their tiptoes to get a better view of the unfolding plan of salvation.

In light of what we have covered this morning, I would like us to consider how fortunate we are. We are permitted to see more than the greatest Old Testament prophet ever saw. We have the clearest and fullest picture of salvation. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have Old Testament prophecies given centuries before Jesus was born that clearly speak about Him, and on top of that, we have New Testament accounts about Jesus, from apostles like Peter, who actually walked and talked with Him. Plus, we get to experience salvation from a personal relationship with Jesus, something that angels can only look upon. They can only be spectators of salvation – but we get to be participants.

At the beginning of my message this morning, I told you that our passage was about salvation, and that is absolutely right, but in light of the persecution and the suffering the recipients of this letter were experiencing, I think there is also a focus by Peter on the assurance of salvation – more specifically, doubts about salvation and maybe even doubts about God, and let me explain.

In times of trials and suffering, people may wrestle with questions of doubt when they fail to see God working on their behalf in the way they expect. As an example, John the Baptist was sitting in a small prison cell, likely expecting that Jesus would set him free, but that never happen. So, John sent messengers to Jesus to ask if He was really the Christ or should they look for another. John asked this

question after he had baptized Jesus and declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John's wrong expectations about Jesus led him to doubt, and just for clarification, doubt is not the same as unbelief. Doubt is when you question what you already believe.

It was Oswald Chambers who once said, *"Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong; it may be a sign that he is thinking."* And Chuck Swindoll once said, *"It is the right of every believer to go through halls of doubt on their way to rooms of truth."*

Truth – it's truth that answers our questions of doubt – doubt about our future, doubt about our salvation and even doubt about God, and when all the dust settles as you wrestle with questions of doubt, one question must be asked and answered: **Who is Jesus?**

That question must be asked and answered because our assurance, our hope and our future hangs on that question. **Who is Jesus?**

And any answer that one might give must be grounded in truth. The predictions of the Old Testament prophets have all come true in the Person of Jesus Christ, and we also have the eyewitness accounts of the apostles who wrote down what they personally saw and heard about Jesus, even though, they knew it would lead to their own suffering and execution. And they weren't executed for what they believed – people die for what they believe all the time, instead the apostles were willing to die for what they said they *saw* and *heard* – and that's entirely different. We have divinely inspired truth in both the Old and New Testaments that can answer the question for us: **Who is Jesus?**

Our Lord deals in futures – namely, our salvation, and the trials and the suffering that we experience in this life does not diminish the truth and the living hope we have in Jesus Christ. When you have questions of doubt, remember that your doubt does not determine the truth. Doubts come and go, but the truth about Jesus Christ stands forever and that's where you need to stand – in the truth.

Source Material:

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