

The Surpassing Beauty of this Present Moment

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Part 8

Our Identity in Christ

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Please open your Bibles, if you will, at 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1. Going to be in 1 Peter again this morning and then, Lord willing, next week I plan to preach directly on Christmas, so we'll take a week away from this passage, but this morning's passage, I think, relates in a really neat way to Christmas as it talks about the prophecies and the prophets who prophesied. We'll be looking at verses 10 to 12 of 1 Peter 1.

I want to remind you of the overall context again in 1 Peter. He's trying to prepare people, believers in Christ who are already experiencing difficulties because of their faith. They are experiencing opposition, rejection, hatred because they love Christ, and as Jesus had promised, "If they hated Me, they will hate you. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you," because men love darkness rather than light and we are the light of the world. And so he wrote this epistle with the particular aim of preparing those believers in Asia Minor for the coming suffering that they would experience, the suffering they were already beginning to experience and it was going to become much greater. And we've noted how as he begins his letter, he starts with the important essential attitude of thankfulness, that if we're going to be strong and bear up in difficult times, we need to be a thankful people. And we've seen that over the last few weeks as we looked at verses 3 to 9 and we talked about the stabilizing power of thankfulness. Verses 10 to 12 actually continue to call us to thankfulness. It's a shift of focus and so we look at that this morning.

The title of the message is "The Surpassing Beauty of this Present Moment." The surpassing beauty of this present moment. What I want you to see that Peter is going to unpack for us in these next three verses is, he's telling his readers, and you and I are in the same place they were on this side of Christ's atonement, on this side of his resurrection, on this side of Pentecost with the presence of the Holy Spirit as Ted mentioned, we now have the Holy Spirit, we have Christ present in us, the hope of glory, in this moment we stand at the most glorious of all time and if we could see where we are, our hearts would be overwhelmed with gratitude and our hearts filled with wonder. The surpassing beauty of this present moment. Our problem is we don't keep our eyes open spiritually to what really is ours in Christ and so he's inviting us to see that this morning. Thinking about, you know, when you're seeing something incredibly beautiful. I want you to think about

the most beautiful scenery you've ever seen in your life, the places that you've been where you were just filled with awe and wonder. You know, when you see something that is sublime, you see something natural that makes you think of the spiritual that lifts you above the moment and into something of eternal significance. You just look at a beautiful sunset or maybe you've been to the Grand Canyon. You remember the first moment when you got to the place that you could begin to take it in. Grand is too small a word for that, isn't it? It's much better than the Grand Canyon. But when you saw it or you came to a place on the ocean and you saw the waves crashing against the rocks and your heart was filled with wonder and you thought this beauty is just overwhelming. Now you imagine you've got a teenager there who hasn't lived long enough to know that these things don't come around that often, and maybe they're on their phone texting. Here you are at the Grand Canyon. They're on their phone texting. You're at the ocean, this resplendent sunset happening over the ocean, this moment being so beautiful, so glorious, and here they are checking their phone to see if anybody has texted them or to see what's happening, you know, or to see something what's going on tomorrow because they're so excited, they're more excited about tomorrow than they are the moment. Think about not just to pick on teenagers because we all, adults, find themselves on their phones far too much too, don't they? Looking at our phones when we could be enjoying a moment of communion with another human being that's right there in front of us.

So we miss the important for the trivial far too often, but we also can be trapped in another similar error, the lure of nostalgia. You know, to think about the good old days. Isn't that something that's just endemic, endemic to humanity. We think back if you live long enough, you think back to it was so much better then, and long for the good old days. We long for the days of our youth as we get older, to have the vibrancy of youth again, but we also think back to the way things were better and in some cases they were. I mean, it's not to say that things don't decline. Yes, they do. But this lure of nostalgia, or equally dangerous, the lure of the future, the anticipation of what it's going to be like when we get to this day. You know, as a young person when I'm in college or when I get married, or for older folks when I reach retirement and we get to move to our retirement location or whatever, which I think is often an evaporating dream. People go to retirement places where they want to be in a new beautiful place and they leave all the relationships they had behind and they find that it's not what they expected. It's never what you expect. The good old days really aren't as good as you think they were, but what is it about us that we're always looking outside of the present moment? What God wants us to do is to live in the wonder of the present moment. Now as we anticipate heaven, yes, when everything will be far better, so our hearts are set on heaven and yet he wants us to not be so consumed with even the glory of heaven that we forget the wonder of what we're living in right now if you are in Christ, the blessedness that is yours is virtually indescribable right now.

That's what Peter's going to tell you, and he's going to argue that nobody ever had it as good as you and I have it now. You know, have you ever thought, "I wish I could be like Abraham and have God speak to me face-to-face"? Or, "I could be like Samuel and have God speak audibly out of heaven. Samuel, Samuel." I mean don't you want to know the direction that you need to take in your life and you wish God would just speak audibly to

you? Or to have seen his glory visibly like the Israelites did when they went out of Egypt, they saw the pillar burning by day, the fire blazing, you know, the smoke just visibly reflecting the effulgence of divine glory. Or to have eaten manna out of heaven, to have seen water come out of the rock, to have seen the Red Sea parted, to have walked over the Jordan on dry land, to have seen God do those miracles. "Oh, that we could have been there!" And if we could talk to any of those people who were there, if we could talk to Abraham or Isaac, or Jacob, or David, or Solomon or Samuel, or Isaiah or Ezekiel, they would say, "Oh, how we long to be where you are now." That's the reality and he's going to argue not only that, he's going to argue that angels who dwell in the glory of the presence of God, seeing him, experiencing the radiance of his glory, in his presence, they long to know what you know now if you're in Christ. They look at us and say, "What are you doing on your cell phone? Why are you not enjoying the wonder of all Christ has done for you?" That's the message that we have before us today.

1 Peter 1. I'm going to read verses 3 to 12 because he's summing up in the first words of verse 10, "As to this salvation," he's summing up the seven blessings that we saw in previous weeks, the blessedness that we saw in those first verses 3 to 9 and now he's saying the prophets and the angels wish they had what you have. So verse 3,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 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.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we praise You for the gift of Your word. We worship You because You are worthy of worship. You alone are God. We are your creatures. You have made us for Your purposes. By all rights we belong to You just as Your creatures and then, Lord, to

know Your salvation that we just read about, to be redeemed and given the new birth through the glorious work of our Savior. We stand in awe of You. We ask You, Lord, to open our eyes of our hearts. Help us to see with the eyes of faith that which is most real and most valuable that we might live in a manner worthy of the calling which we've been called. For the glory of our Savior, we pray in His name. Amen.

So the surpassing beauty of this present moment. Peter's argument is that if we just could see what is really the most obvious thing in reality, we don't see these things with our earthly eyes but if with the eyes of faith we could see we stand at the most wonderful moment in all of history to this point. Now heaven is going to be better. Yes, he's already established that, but at this moment we stand at the most wonderful moment in all of history, and in some sense, some of the inhabitants of heaven, we have it better now than they do, that is, the angels. We don't have it better than the saints who have gone on before us. No, they understand what we understand, but we have it better, in one sense, than the angels. That's what he says at the end of that verse.

So the prophets and the angels. There are two points this morning for us to understand and to see this beauty of the present moment so that we would have gratitude, that we would rejoice and take delight in our present position; even though the world may be going down, it doesn't change this reality. We still are recipients of this surpassing beauty, this exceeding greatness of glory. And the two points, the first point is: the prophets of God long to see what you see. The idea is, if you could understand why you should be filled with joy, here are two reasons to buttress it, the prophets of God longed to see what you now see with the eyes of faith. They had the eyes of faith, but they couldn't see what you see because it had not yet been disclosed to them. This is his point, and the main point he spends most of his time talking about in these verses. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, made careful searches and inquiries seeking to know what person or time. Matthew 13:17, Jesus actually said to the crowd that was gathered around him, he said, "Blessed are your eyes because they see what you see. I say to you, prophets longed to see the things that you see and did not see them." It's also said in Luke 10:24, that same statement of Jesus. He's telling them that they're seeing at that moment the things that the prophets longed to see. Why? Because they were looking for the person and time of Christ and here he is. Now Peter's argument is we have it every bit as good as the people who were in Jesus' day, in fact, even better because we now have the full measure of the Holy Spirit, that those who Jesus said they longed to see what you see with their eyes, we now see it even more clearly through the eyes of faith.

Now two subpoints here. The prophets long to see what you see. Who are they? First subpoint 1A: who are they? Who were the prophets? Who is he talking about? It's important to talk about this because we may be confused on this point. The word "prophet" is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. The prophets were those sometimes referred to just the portion of the Old Testament from Isaiah to Malachi. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, all the way down to Malachi, and those are the prophets. They are. That's one use of the word. But what Peter means here is the more general use of the word "prophet" that the Bible uses and that is as a spokesman for God. When he says the

prophets here, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, he's speaking of every Old Testament author of Scripture. Every Old Testament author from Moses to Malachi, not from Isaiah to Malachi, from Moses to Malachi.

The word "prophet," translated "prophet" in Hebrew, here in the Greek we're in the New Testament, but the New Testament words draw on the meaning of the Old Testament words because it's one book and we're going to see that even as we look at this. So when they use the word "prophetae" in Greek, they were looking back to the Hebrew word, navi, which means "spokesman, a divine spokesman." The prophet was the man not who foretold the future. Sometimes he did, but it was more about, you've probably heard this, forthtelling than foretelling. It was that he had the words of God given to him to speak for God. He was the mouthpiece of God. He was the one. And this is why you read over and over in the Old Testament, "The word of the Lord came to Malachi. The word of the Lord came to Isaiah." The word of the Lord even came to Abraham, Genesis 15:1 and 4. Really interesting, Abraham was a prophet in that sense though he didn't write any of the Bible. He spoke to us authoritatively what God showed him in Genesis 15 about the covenant, the way of salvation. So prophet speaks of Moses all the way to Malachi and even Abraham and guys before that in ways, but specifically of the ones who spoke for God and then wrote down the pages of Scripture. Just to show you this, how they think this way, Peter in his sermon at Pentecost in Jerusalem, quotes from Joel to show that Jesus is who he said he is, that he is the Christ. He quotes from the prophet Joel, a latter prophet, one of the minor prophets. And he quotes twice from David; he quotes from Psalm 16 and Psalm 110. And he speaks in Acts 2:30 of David as a prophet. Wasn't David a king? Yes, he was, but he was also a prophet because he spoke the word of God and wrote the word of God. So the prophets were Moses, David, Solomon, Samuel and all of the other authors of Scripture.

So who are they? They're the divine spokesmen who spoke for God. That's 1A. 1B: what did they write about or who did they write about? 1B. And according to 1 Peter 1, they wrote about Christ. They wanted 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. This is saying, we're going to see it in other places I'm going to show you this, that the real essential message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, this, in one word, the message of the Bible is Christ. It is all about Jesus. It is all about the Messiah. It is all about the Savior. That's the purpose of all of Scripture. From the earliest chapters of Genesis to the end of Revelation, it is all about Christ. And so the whole Old Testament, not just the New Testament, many Christians know the New Testament is all about Christ, no, but the Old Testament is all about Christ.

Jesus made this clear in John 5:46. The Jews are not believing in him and he says, "if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for Moses wrote about Me." Moses and he never mentioned Jesus by name. He never even used the term Christ in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, but Jesus said, "He was writing all about Me." All throughout the Pentateuch. We'll look at a few passages, but we could spend hours and hours unpacking all that the Pentateuch has to say about Christ.

Let me show you, look over to Luke 24, one of the passages that shows this so clearly. This is a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus on the day he was resurrected to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and later to the apostles. In 2:25, this is when he's explaining to them, these two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?'" He said, "Listen, if you've been reading your Old Testament, you would know that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and then enter into His glory." Do you see what Peter said? They were writing about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. It's exactly what Jesus is saying. The whole Old Testament has been saying that Christ must suffer and then there will be glory that follows after the messianic victory through suffering.

"Was it not necessary," verse 26, "for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." What an awesome day, Bible study that was, Jesus himself explaining through the Old Testament all of the Scriptures related to him that prophesied him. And then later in that same chapter, verse 44, he's eating a piece of broiled fish with the disciples and he says this in verse 44. "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" What's the main point of the Psalms and the prophets and Moses? It's Jesus and everything written about him must be fulfilled.

"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," verse 46, "and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'" He's saying the whole Old Testament pointed to the fact that Christ would suffer and then would experience glory, not just the latter prophets. But in fact, the Jews actually always referred to the former prophets and the latter prophets. The latter prophets were Isaiah to Malachi. The former prophets were everybody before that, the law and the prophets, the law of Moses. That was one of the ways they would break down the Scriptures.

So who did they write about? They wrote about Christ. Let me show you this, look with me back, let's turn to Genesis and, like I said, we could spend so much time on this but I just want to hit a few highlights and encourage you as you read the Old Testament look for these places where it just jumps out at you. The first place is in the very first three chapters of the Bible. Genesis 3:15. This is where the first place where the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow were prophesied. This is sometimes called the Protoevangelion, the first preaching of the gospel was in Genesis 3:15. When God judged the serpent and God judged Adam and Eve, he gave them the gospel in that moment. He gave them the gospel as he was speaking to the serpent. He's condemning Satan, and in the words he says to Satan, he gives the promise of salvation. Genesis 3:15. He's talking to the serpent now and he says, "I will put enmity Between you and the woman," between you, Satan, and the woman, "And between your seed and her seed." So the seed of the

woman and the seed of the serpent there will be enmity between, and speaking of her seed, that is Christ, "He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise Him on the heel." There's going to be a conflict between her seed and your seed and that conflict is going to bring pain to both parties. Her seed is going to be bruised, damaged, greatly injured, and yet in his injury he's going to destroy your seed. That's the first preaching of the gospel. That's a picture of the cross. That's a picture of the virgin birth. The only man that was ever born, the seed of a woman, was Jesus himself born without a human father, placed in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Well, turn with me to chapter 22. I mentioned chapter 15. I'll just mention quickly that you have in chapter 15, that's where I mentioned that the Scripture actually has this formula that's normally used of prophets, "Now the word of the Lord came to Abram saying," it says it twice. It's like highlight that point. This chapter is so important in your Bible. Actually just turn there since we're right there at it, Genesis 15:1, "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.'" Look down at verse 4, "Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.' And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." That formula, "The word of the LORD came to Abram," a Jew reading his Bible, hearing the words proclaimed, would have heard that and understood this is the prophetic formula, what's about to happen is of the greatest importance. This is one of the most important passages in all of Scripture here in Genesis 15 because it makes clear the way of salvation. Abraham was justified by faith alone. He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, that is, righteousness was imputed to him on the basis of his faith.

In Romans 4, Paul makes the argument, he's explaining, "Listen, this whole idea of justification by faith is not a new doctrine as my enemies are claiming." There are people criticizing Paul and the evangelists, the other apostles as they go out preaching the gospel. They're saying, "This is some new, weird, you know, cultish thing." This is what the Jews were say. "You're not justified by faith alone. This is insane." And Paul goes in Romans 4 and says, "Let's see what Abraham, our father in the faith, has found," and he goes back to Genesis 15 and he says, "This is what Abraham found about how you're justified." How is a man made right with God? How is man justified? And he goes back and he looks and quotes Genesis 15:6, "You're justified by faith alone, you believe the promise of God. God will save you if you look to Christ. If you are united to Christ by faith, if you just trust in him, if you turn from your trusting in your own righteousness and you place all of your hope in Jesus and you place all of your righteousness is thrown aside because it's filthy rags and you look only to the merits of Christ and His death in your place, His righteousness as your gift, you are justified forever."

That's the gospel and so Genesis 15, right after this now, you have the covenant ceremony because Abraham says, "How will I know I'm going to possess this land? You told me I'm going to have seed, I'm going to have a descendant, I'm going to have the

land, how can I know you're going to possess this land?" And God does a covenant ceremony with him. This was very familiar to Abraham's day. This was something that was done continued by leaders. You know, a king of a certain city and a king of another city would make a treaty, a covenant, and they would kill animals like a cow, you know, sheep, birds, and they would split them in two and separate the pieces. So they butcher these animals, separate them apart, and then as you make the promises, you pass between the animals. Both parties pass between the animals and essentially the meaning is, "If I don't keep my promise, let me be like these animals." And so blessings and curses attend the making of a covenant. The blessings are, "We will, you know, we will be true to one another. We will defend one another. We're united. But if I don't keep my part of the bargain, let me be like these animals." So the curse of the covenant falls on the one who does not keep the covenant.

In Genesis 15 when you read on down, Abram falls into a deep sleep. God appears to him. The pieces are there, and a flaming torch passes between the pieces up and again, and Abraham does not pass through the pieces. He should. Why did he not? Because God is saying, "If I don't keep My covenant," God is saying, "let Me be like these. It's unthinkable that I won't keep My covenant, but if it were, let Me be like these pieces. And if you don't keep your covenant, let the curse of the covenant fall on Me." The suffering of Christ right there in Genesis 15. God himself will suffer. "How can it be that my God would die for me?" It was there in Genesis 15.

Then Genesis 22, the story of Abraham and Isaac. Look at chapter 22. Abraham now has had a son. His son is probably around 10 to 15 years old. We don't know for sure, we're not told exactly when this happened, but Isaac's still a boy. "It came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac," look at the wording, "your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." And the story unfolds that Abram gets up the next morning and saddles his donkey and takes two servants with him and they go to the land of Moriah. He leaves the servants and says, "We're going to go over and worship, the lad and I are going to go over and worship and return to you." You see his faith even there, how hard and awful this whole experience was for Abraham in one sense, but in another sense, how glorious and wonderful. He's wrestling in his heart with the ways of God. "Why is God asking me to do this?" This is the son that he said the promise is going to come through, and he knows God had told him, "Through Isaac, your seed, your descendants will be named. Through Isaac I'm going to make a great nation of you." "So if You're telling me to kill him, it must be that You're going to raise him from the dead." So when he says to his servants, "I and the boy are going to go and worship God and return to you," he has faith. I mean, he must be holding on with his fingernails, but he has great faith in that moment and he goes all the way to the point where he starts to bring the knife down and God stops him and says, "No, no, Abraham. I now know that you fear Me." But what was that all about? God was testing his faith. Yes, God was doing that, but God was showing us that what needed to happen for salvation was that God was going to send his Son, look at the language, his Son, his only Son whom he loves to be an offering for us. The preciousness of his Son.

The preciousness of Abraham's son only dimly in some small, tiny way, approximates the preciousness of God's Son to him.

In Hebrews 11:15 to 17, the author of Hebrews picks up on this and he says Abraham's faith was confirmed even when he offered up Isaac and he was confident that God was going to raise him from the dead, and when the Lord didn't, remember the Lord said, "No, don't kill him," and there was a ram in the thicket and he offered the ram in the place of Isaac, and then he said, "In the mountain of the Lord it would be provided." He gave God the name Yahweh Yireh or Jehovah Jireh, that is, the Lord will provide. The Lord will provide an offering. And the author of Hebrews says when he took his son, he was ready to kill him, he tied him up on the altar, he was ready to kill him, and now God says no, and he sees the ram in the thicket, and when he took Isaac back into his arms, he said he received him back, not just his precious son, he received him back as a type, that God opened his eyes and he saw, "This is all about what you are going to do." Somehow he saw dimly into the future that Christ was going to come and die in his place, in our place, the place of sinners who will trust in him.

The book of Exodus. The Passover lamb. Why did they have to kill a spotless lamb? Why did they have to put the blood over the doorpost so that the angel of wrath would pass over them, the destroyer? Why? To show us that the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. Why did they eat manna from heaven? Why did God make them go out without food provisions? Why didn't they go ahead and get from the Egyptians all they needed? Why weren't there fast-food places along the way? God could have made fast-food places. He probably wouldn't have done that, he would have done healthy, something more healthy, but he could have had whatever he wanted to do. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He could have brought out the flocks from other places, just come out. I mean, he did it for Noah. The animals came, he could have brought them to them so they could have eaten all along the way. No, he didn't. He led them through the desert and he fed them with manna from heaven so that they would learn that man doesn't live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, according to Deuteronomy 8:2, but also according to John 6, he fed you with manna and then Jesus said, "He fed you with manna because I am the true bread of heaven. The manna was a picture of Me. You need Me. You need to feed on Me. You need to know Me. You need to receive Me in the deepest part of your heart, your soul, if you are to live."

Leviticus, we see the glory of the Day of Atonement, the one day a year when the high priest is able to go past the veil. Remember, God sets up the tabernacle. He's showing how can a sinner approach a holy God. This is not a small thing. It's not an easy thing for you as a sinner to come into the presence of God. It's a miraculous, it's the most amazing reality that's ever happened that you and I as sinful as we are, can approach God. In that scene, even in the way the tabernacle was set up, the tabernacle was in the center of the nation, but the priests dwelt around it. The people couldn't come close. They could only approach the edge of the tabernacle. The priests alone could go inside the tabernacle courts. They could make the offerings. They could offer the prayers. The people could not. The priests who had been washed and separated for that purpose and for that time would offer the sacrifices, would offer the incense, and one day a year. Remember how

the tabernacle was set up, the outer courts, the inside tent proper, tabernacle proper, which later became the temple, the permanent version, had the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, or you may have heard the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies separated by veil the ark of the covenant back there, the presence of God, his footstool literally, in that place. No one could go behind the veil except one man on one day every year, one time a year. The high priest would go behind the veil on the Day of Atonement. The only time any human being could enter into the true presence of God was that one day. He had to go through extraordinary rituals of cleansing and washing. He had to offer a sacrifice for himself, to cleanse himself, and then he had to take the blood of the sacrifice for the people. And remember the beauty of how he did it. He confessed the sins of the people. He laid his hands on one goat as he confessed the sins of the people, and then he took another goat and he killed it and he took the blood back into the to the temple, to the tabernacle, and then he walked behind the veil and he sprinkled it on the mercy seat. He had bells on his robe. Theologians have surmised the reason he had bells on his robe is so they could hear that he was still moving. And they always tied a rope to his foot because if he died because he was sinful, you'd stop hearing the bells and you'd just pull him out with the rope because no one else could go behind the veil.

So he took the blood and he offered it. This is the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, once a year he offers the blood for the sins of the people, and then that second goat was called the scapegoat, that he confessed the sins over, and he laid his hands on the scapegoat, and that scapegoat was driven out away from the camp, out into the place of solitude away from the presence of God, away from the blessing of God out into a distant land, the wilderness, the barrenness. And these things were both prophesying to us Jesus. Because in the cross, Jesus literally, he offered his blood. His flesh was pierced so that you and I could be saved. His blood was shed. His physical body. He experienced the physical agony of the cross, but he also, the scapegoat, he was the scapegoat also because on the cross he was abandoned by God the Father. I mean, as we can understand it, the Trinity was not broken. Somehow in the deity of Christ, of course, it could not be that way, but the favor of God was withdrawn from him in such a way that it was so painful. This is why Jesus sweat drops of blood the night before his crucifixion. He wasn't merely afraid of the physical agony of the cross. Other people died by the cross. He was dreading the spiritual agony of the separation from God's loving favor. Whatever that was, that was what caused him to agonize before the cross. And you see both of those things are prefigured in Leviticus. We could walk through every book in Scripture and see how God was pointing to Christ, and that's what Jesus did with the apostles.

So that's who did they write about, 1B. 1C: what were they searching for? They were searching for the person and time of Christ. You see in 1 Peter 1 again, verse 10, they "made careful searches and inquiries, 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." The language is intense. The two verbs there in verse 10, "made careful searches and inquiries," there are actually two verbs in the Greek and they both mean just to search out, and they're intensified forms of words which mean search out and look earnestly for. They're intensified forms. These guys were searching with all of their might something. They were looking for something. It pictures like, you know, if you lose

something and it's not that valuable, you look for it, but, you know, it's not that big a deal. If you think your wife has lost her wedding ring and her diamond, you know, her engagement ring, that's a different level of the search, isn't it? I mean, or a diamond earring instead of just a cosmetic jewelry earring, right? The value of what you're looking for affects the intensity and the fervency of the search. This is describing the greatest intensity and the greatest fervency. It's saying Isaiah and Jeremiah and Moses and Abraham when they were prophesying of what would come, they were searching. They wanted to know more. They were looking with all of their might. They were overturning everything they could in their minds in the Bible that they had already received and they were looking, what were they looking for? They were looking for Christ and it was shown to them that they would not see him like you now are able to see him.

They were serving us, not themselves, and so we have the fullness of the glory of Christ made known to us, and what Peter was describing in the previous passage, when you go through suffering, remember when you go through suffering and you have joy with, you know, your eternal reward, your new birth, and then you go through sorrow and suffering. What happens? More joy. And why is there more joy? Because there's more of the knowledge of Christ, the experiential knowledge of Jesus. He becomes more real to you. You see him more clearly. You understand his love more truly. That is what the prophets wanted to see and you, if you're truly born again, if you're a believer, you have the opportunity every day to see Christ, to know him as you read the pages of Scripture now, a full, perfect revelation of him, complete. The Bible is complete. It tells you everything you need to know about Jesus and now through your experience, God opens your heart so that you can see him. This is what all of those old prophets, Old Testament prophets wanted to see.

So never think back and envy Abraham or David. They envy you, they envied you. Your vision of Christ is so much clearer. And then secondly, not only do you see that something the prophets of God longed to see what you see, secondly, angels of God longed to know what you know. Very last phrase in verse 12, "things into which angels long to look." Now he's talking about the angels, the glorious angels of heaven. This word refers to all of the attendants of God, all of the spiritual beings that God made for his glory that are still worshipping him. You know, the fallen angels, a third of the angels of heaven fell in Satan's rebellion, but the other two-thirds, myriads upon myriads attend his throne. This is the seraphim and the cherubim. This is Michael and Gabriel and every other angel. He's saying that the angels are longing to look into what you and I have.

The first thing to note is that when it says, "long to look," this is actually a Greek present verb. It means they are continuously longing. The prophets longed, past tense. The angels are longing, present tense, continually longing for something you have. They're longing to look. You may have a footnote in your version that tells you this means to stoop down, gain a clear glimpse. Literally the Greek verb here after that present tense participle "longing," then there's an infinitive, aorist infinitive, "to look." They are longing to, and literally it means to stoop down, it means to bend over so that you can look at something.

I think the word choice is interesting and intriguing. Think about this. The angels have an exalted position over us. They're greater than we are right now. Far greater. They have lofty status. They have moral excellence. They have spiritual magnificence. They are everything that is perfect and holy. No sin. Angels have never sinned. They don't know what it's like to sin. Oh, what would it be like to not be able to sin? How clean would you feel if you could not sin, if you could put off all of your sin now, how clean would you feel? The angels know that and have only known that. How much more intelligent they are than us. How much more abilities they have. They can appear and disappear. They can travel, you know, incredibly fast. We don't even know, the Scripture doesn't tell us, but they make time whenever they go anywhere. They're never late. They're always on time. Even when they have to battle with the enemy, they're still on time. Daniel 10 to 12 talks about that.

These angels who dwell in the presence of God, who see his glory now, remember the seraphim? They may have to cover their eyes, like remember the seraphim that Isaiah saw? He had this one glimpse into heaven in Isaiah 6, the glory of the Lord, the train of his robe filled the temple and the angels cried, "Holy, Holy, Holy." And he saw the seraphim, and they had six wings, with two they flew, with two they covered their feet, and with two they covered their eyes. But they were in the presence of God, and they were continually saying, "Holy, holy, Holy." The most wonderful thing you can do is worship God. You were created to worship God. The angels continually worship God. They know the joy of continually worshiping God, and yet they envy you.

How is it? How can that be? He says they long to look into these things. What is he talking about? If the prophets longed to see Christ the way you see him, the angels long to know grace the way you know it. He says, "As to this salvation," verse 10, "the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries." So they want to understand the grace, they want to understand Christ, but the angels, they see Christ but they don't know grace. What is grace? Grace is God's unmerited favor. Grace is God's, the goodness and graciousness of God, his loving kindness, his mercy toward people who don't deserve it. They don't know what it's like to be a sinner, to be a wicked sinner and then to be changed and brought in the presence of God and they'll never know that.

You know it if you're in Christ, and you know it, you are knowing it now. It's going to be even more wonderful in heaven, yes, but Peter is saying right now if you just reflect upon the fact of the grace that you have received, that God, think about where you were when God found you. The author, Paul, it says in Ephesians 2, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Remember where you were formerly, you were dead in trespasses and sins. You were slaves of the God of this age. You were walking according to the course of this present world, this present darkness. You were just in misery and chains, and you were gladly doing it. You were, as Colossians 1 says, you were actively engaged in hostility to God. You may have pretended to be religious, but you were hostile to the true God who demands submission and trust only in his Son. And God found you and looked at you as you were his enemy, God looked at you and loved you and God granted you a new heart and he opened your eyes and he gave you the ability to see how unworthy you were. You

saw the poverty of your soul. The filth even our righteousness is as filthy rags. And yet he invited you to walk not just into the outer courts of his temple, he invited you because of the blood of Christ to walk directly into the Holy of Holies and you are there now. And in moments when you commune with God, you're aware of that. Most of the time you can't see it, but the reality is, according to Ephesians 2, that passage, Ephesians 2:1 to 9 later, you are seated with Christ in the heavenly places now. So you are recipients of his grace and the angels can't even fathom the wonder of the grace that you know.

So the message is, listen, if you have a salvation right now, no matter how bad your life is, you have something right now that is so amazing that all of the prophets of the Old Testament long to see it, and all of the angels of heaven long to know it, and God has given it to you and me in Christ for the praise of the glory of his grace, not because of anything in us, but for the praise of the glory of his grace, he's done this. If we keep our eyes on that, we will be thankful. We will be joyful and we will be steadfast and immovable. That's what God wants for us. That's what God wants for you and that's what Christ has purchased for you who believe. Do you know him? Are you trusting fully in him by faith? Are you surrendering everything else to him because of his love? If not, go to him now. Run to him now. He receives sinners. He's promised he will see any who come to him. And if he's yours now, if he's your Savior now, just bask in the wonder of his love and his glory and try to live by his grace, by his grace, by his grace, a life that is worthy of such a glorious salvation.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we marvel at the wonder of what You've done for us. We stand in awe of Your salvation. We stand in awe of Your infinite love and matchless grace. We confess how unworthy we are in ourselves and we rejoice in the worthiness and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, that You were pleased to look on Him and pardon me, and You receive us into Your presence. Lord, help us to be people who walk by faith and not by sight, people whose eyes of faith get clearer and sharper with each passing day, and make us more joyful and more faithful and more thankful for the glory of our Savior. We pray in His name. Amen.