

Dear Friends,

At first thought, we might not think of 1 Peter as particularly directed - or even helpful - to us. However, the encouragement and insights Peter includes in this letter encourage the faith of every child of grace who longs and labors to serve the Lord better. While most of those who read these words have never known the intense persecution which Peter's first readers endured, we each face our own seasons of discouragement. Peter gently takes us by the hand in those seasons and reminds us of the Lord's present - and eternal - treasure which He secured for us in Jesus and holds ready for us when we leave this world.

Take heart, Pilgrim. This letter has good words for you. Study them devotedly. And take them to heart faithfully. Life brings its pains and troubles, but, for those who live looking in faith to Jesus and searching in Scripture for His way, Peter's message reminds us. The Lord doesn't always instantly take away our troubles and pains, but He is always present to help us get through them to a better day - or a better "Day."

God bless,
Joe Holder

A "Now" Salvation Which Angels Desire to Understand

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1:10-12 KJV 1900)

In Verse 9, Peter referred to our **"Receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of your souls."** "Receiving" in this verse is a present tense verb. The first recipients of Peter's letter were already saved, as we think of salvation in the eternal sense. And that salvation comes to every blood-bought child of grace in an instant. It is not an ongoing process. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10b, Paul emphasized this past tense truth of our eternal salvation,

"...which **delivered** us from the wrath to come." That this salvation of which Peter wrote is present tense speaks distinctly to the thought that he was referring to another salvation than our eternal deliverance. Often in Scripture present tense verbs identify an ongoing process, a continuing action. We live our lives in the present tense.

It is a very rare thing, but I have occasionally heard believers refer to their discipleship, their time salvation, as something of little significance. In most cases, they voiced this sentiment when they were intent on abandoning their faith for indulgent sin. There is nothing in Scripture to support such a faithless attitude. Peter wrote of this "Now salvation." (1 Peter 3:21 KJV) "...baptism doth also **now save us.**" In 1 Peter 1:9, he refers to an ever-present blessed process of our "Receiving" this salvation as we walk the Faith Way.

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. What can we learn of this ongoing salvation experience, this "Receiving" salvation, this "Now save us" salvation? Peter opens the page and explains it to us clearly.

We can't know how much—or little—Old Testament believers understood about their future Savior. When we read passages from Job or Moses that reveal their joyful hope in their future deliverance—and Deliverer—we can't ignore that they had far more insight than we might suppose. Hebrews 11 provides even more specific examples of the supernatural revelations and convictions of faith in the children of God who lived and died prior to Jesus' coming.

...**inquired and searched diligently.** These words give us the sense that those ancient prophets knew enough to understand that God had something amazing in store for His people when Messiah came, though they never fully understood the details of those blessings.

...who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. They didn't prophesy personal imaginations. Their prophecies gave voice to what the Lord revealed to them and directed them to write. But they knew that God had so much more in store for His people when Messiah, "Immanuel," (Isaiah 7:14 KJV) would come. Matthew 1:23 quotes this verse relative to Jesus' birth, and interprets the word "Immanuel," "...which being interpreted is, **God with us.**" The Biblical truth of this lesson, as in other Scriptures, is that Jesus' coming in human flesh was in fact God coming in human flesh. God who created the universe condescended to inhabit a human body! Amazing grace indeed. Old Testament prophets who knew their own language well would read this word and sense two supernatural miracles. 1) A virgin would have a child. 2) God would be that child. If God gave them knowledge of these two truths, what amazing blessings unknown to them would accompany "God Incarnate," God coming in a human body?

...the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Two significant points come to light in this verse. First, the Spirit of Christ dwelled in Old Testament saints, affirmed by this reference to the prophets. The Jeremiah 31 reference to God writing His law in the hearts of His people is a reference to the New Testament form of worship, not to eternal salvation. God never changed how He saves His people in the sense of vital or eternal salvation. All the redeemed in Revelation 5:9 (Most of whom at the time were Old Testament redeemed people) sang the same song of praise for their redemption "by thy blood." Jesus' atoning death was no less for Old Testament chosen vessels of mercy than for New Testament redeemed. Second, The Spirit of Christ in those Old Testament prophets bore witness in advance of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Jesus said that Moses "wrote of me," (John 5:46 KJV) the most undeniable affirmation we could have. Further, Isaiah 53, including the closing verses of Chapter 52, provides a powerful description of Jesus' sufferings, as well as the withdrawal of the disciples at His arrest and crucifixion, and he wrote these words some 700 years before the events occurred. Hebrews 11:26 states that Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Thoughtful Old Testament research could multiply this list. These examples affirm Peter's point, the Holy Spirit's point, in this verse. The Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of Christ" in-dwelt Old Testament children of God.

However, New Testament teaching, including our study passage, reminds us of a major difference. By faith, we read our Bible and learn the details of Jesus' public ministry, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension. For a moment, try to put yourself in the position those Old Testament people occupied. By His internal testimony, the same Holy Spirit gave them assurance and light regarding the future coming and work of Jesus just as He gives us insight and light on the historic public ministry and teachings, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension as we read the record of these events in Scripture. We can't fully grasp the idea of living our life with the anticipation of all these glorious events yet to come. Hopefully, this effort gives us greater appreciation of the power of the indwelling Spirit in them, along with the power of the "Faith of Christ" in them. (Romans 3:22, Galatians 2:16, 2:20, 3:22, Ephesians 3:12, and Philippians 3:9 KJV) The Lord always provides His children what they need in the time and circumstance in which they live.

Peter includes "the glory that should follow" in his description of the Holy Spirit's work in the Lord's Old Testament people. I'll mention just two Old Testament examples of the Spirit's revelation of that glory.

**For I know that my redeemer liveth,
and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:
And though after my skin worms destroy this body,
yet in my flesh shall I see God:
Whom I shall see for myself,
and mine eyes shall behold,
and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. (Job 19:25-27 KJV)**

**Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:
my flesh also shall rest in hope.
For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Psalm 16:9-10 KJV)**

Almost nothing is known of Job other than what we read in the Old Testament book by his name. We have no knowledge of the culture or even the location of Uz, his homeland. It is generally believed by Bible historians that Job lived near the time of Moses, possibly earlier. Yet "the Spirit of Christ" was in Him and revealed to Him the glorious truth of his "Rock." In addition to this quote from Chapter 19, we read a powerful testimony of Job's hope in the resurrection in Chapter 14.

While David lived in Israel and served as her anointed-of-God king, what he wrote in these verses witnesses to the Spirit's indwelling revelation to Him of His glory and ours at His coming.

As Paul reminded us in Hebrews 11:39-40, God provided something better for "us," for His people who live after Jesus came, that His children before Jesus embraced by faith and longed to see. Our fuller perspective of Jesus affirms and validates their faith.

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Again, just for a moment, try to put yourselves in "Their shoes" and ponder what this verse says. Throughout their lives, these Old Testament prophets served their people and taught them as the Lord directed, including those bright snippets of the coming glory. However, the Holy Spirit intended much of what they wrote for New Testament believers and readers of Scripture. In this way, they ministered to us, not to themselves or even to the people who lived under their teaching. And the things they "Ministered" in their prophecies are the same God glorifying, Christ-centric truths that we learn in our New Testament and in the gospel.

...**which things the angels desire to look into.** These words tease and challenge our questions. Angels are not robots any more than redeemed and born-again children of God are robots. They faithfully serve the Lord's biddings as they minister to the "heirs of salvation." (Hebrews 1:14b KJV) In Paul's extensive teaching on angels in Hebrews 1, we read the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy, "**Let all the angels of God worship him,**" which Paul affirms was fulfilled in Bethlehem at Jesus' birth. What a glorious hymn of praise that must have been! An angel appeared to Mary and to Joseph regarding Jesus' birth. Angels repeatedly ministered to Jesus during His time in a human body. However, Peter reminds us; despite all these ministering activities, some elements of the story of redemption are beyond angels' comprehension. They know it is true, but they "Desire to look into" this redemptive truth with more insight.

This is no different from you and me. Do we always fully understand all about our seasons of service and ministering to others? One of my fathers in the ministry once asked me the direct question, "Joe, explain preaching to me." After I recovered from the shocking reality of his question, I had only one response, "The longer I live the more I realize that I really don't understand preaching at all." He smiled and nodded his head. After many more years than I in ministry, he struggled with this mystery of preaching too. The Lord often accompanies our efforts to serve Him with grace for those to whom we minister far above our comprehension. We see it in them, and we marvel. Example. I've occasionally preached, and someone would approach me after the service to tell me what my preaching prompted them to ponder. Often what they gathered from my preaching was far beyond what I had in mind as I preached. The Lord stirred their mind with fruitful reflections that edified me when they told me. Thank the Lord for such loving mercy.

What encouragement Peter's words must have been to those early persecuted believers who read them. And they are no less encouraging to us if we read them with prayerful faith.

The Lord knows exactly what we need when we need it, and He faithfully ministers to us. Are we sufficiently attuned to Him in faith to recognize His ministering grace? Lord give us ears to hear Your comforting voice, and a heart to believe and rejoice in You and Your glory.

Joseph Hart (1712-1768) wrote an instructive poem/hymn that teaches this gospel truth of the Incarnation.

The Lord that made both heaven and earth,
And was himself made man,
Lay in the womb, before his birth,
Contracted to a span.

Behold, from what beginnings small
Our great salvation rose;
The strength of God is owned by all;
But who his weakness knows?

Let not the strong the weak despise;
Their faith, though small, is true;
Though low they seem in others' eyes,
Their Saviour seemed so too.

Nor meanly of the tempted think;
For O what tongue can tell

How low the Lord of life must sink,
 Before he vanquished hell?

As in the days of flesh he grew
 In wisdom, stature, grace,
So in the soul that's born anew,
 He keeps a gradual pace.

**No less almighty at his birth,
 Than on his throne supreme;
His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
 When Mary held up him.**

Elder Joe Holder