

“So Great Salvation”

1 Peter 1:10-12

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Late one evening, several years ago, I received a phone call from a man with whom I'd had only Christmas card contact for nearly 25 years.

His wife and I had a class together at the University and that is how I met Ray.

Ray and his wife became Christians and for the next 5 years we met together in Bible study and at our church.

Ray began a software business in his basement assisting doctors and medical clinics in managing their paperwork.

Now 25 years later I received the phone call from Ray.

He told me that when he started the business, unknown to me and to several others, he named us as stockholders.

He was now selling the business to United Health Care and I should expect to get a check in the mail for several thousand dollars.

To say the least, I was greatly and pleasantly surprised.

When I hung up the phone, I could hardly wait to tell Barbara.

And when I told her, we both were caught up in a flood of thoughts and words.

We were captured by how, totally unknown to us, actions taken by a man 25 years earlier could result in such a gift now.

Not only were we thinking about the past but we were also anticipating what the gift would mean in the future.

For some time we had been wishing that we could do some remodeling of the house but knew the price was out of reach.

Our oldest daughter was also getting married and we had no way to help with the costs.

But because of a phone call our expectations of those things changed.

Now mind you, as Barbara and I were talking, we had just received the news, no check had been received; and yet we were living in that place between the past, that made it all possible and the future, when we would actually get the money.

But it was as exciting as if the past and future were both right then in the present.

We were living in that “not yet but already” place of a promise.

No money had been received and no money was spent but our attitudes changed as if the future had become present.

With that attitude change in mind, we turn now to a gift far greater and infinitely more significant – the one the Apostle Peter is so excited about.

In Peter’s first letter he is writing to a group of Christians who are living in a culture that is hostile to their faith

He wants to help them live Christianly in a non-Christian world.

So to set the stage for his instructions, he wishes to remind them of the awesome gift they have received.

He’s going to spend the first 350 words of his letter telling them how phenomenal their salvation is.

In the opening of this letter it is their salvation that he is describing.

He describes it as past, present and future; they have been saved, they are being saved and they will be saved.

He wants them to be captured by the significance of their salvation, their new relationship with God.

He wants to give them a God’s-eye perspective on the past and the future so they can live Christianly in the present, even if the present involves hardship.

He wants them to live in that place that promise gives, the place of “not yet but already.”

And so Peter is excited as he writes these opening words of his letter. As I read I will try to do justice to the emotion with which I think Peter wrote these great truths about our salvation.

1 Peter 1:1-12

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout (Asia Minor) who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵ (you) who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--(your faith) may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen (Jesus), you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to **you**, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Pray: “Capture our hearts with the same truths and their importance so that we would live with them always affecting our attitudes and our actions.”

On the three Sundays preceding this one, we have looked at the first 9 verses of this letter.

We saw first of all that our salvation is based on the gracious actions of God **in the past**:

- The Father chose us based on nothing but his choice in love.
- The Spirit set us apart, sanctified us, granting us new life.
- The Son, Jesus, cleansed us, forgave us, based on his death for us.

1 Peter 1:2 "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

We have seen that our salvation results in **a certain future**.

Our new birth results in a living hope and an inheritance that is certain because God will keep it and us secure forever.

1 Peter 1:3-5 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

As he begins that thought he interjects his sense of excitement and worship:

1 Peter 1:3-5 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Thirdly we have seen that **in the present** our salvation results in a faith that is proven genuine and a faith that grows even stronger in the midst of hostility and temptation.

1 Peter 1:6-9 "In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And again he interjects the sense of joy that must be ours as we consider this relationship with God that is ours.

"In this you greatly rejoice..."

And later he again expresses the emotion that fills him: "filled with an expressible and glorious joy."

Now in verses 10-12, our text for today, in that same sense of joy and wonder at God's grace to us, he writes more about this salvation that is ours.

1 Peter 1:10-12 "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

I. First of all, to further impress upon his readers the significance of this salvation, this relationship with God, that they now have, Peter draws attention to the roots of this salvation.

The roots of Barbara's and my gift, announced in a phone call one night, went back a mere 25 years.

Peter reminds us that the roots of our salvation go back thousands of years.

More specifically, so valuable is this salvation that is ours that the prophets of old longed to know more about it.

It was 30 years ago that Alex Haley published his popular work, *Roots*.

It sparked a renewed interest in genealogies.

Sooner or later, it seems everyone wants to know his or her roots.

It is important to know we are somehow connected to something more enduring than just our short lives, to know we belong to something more certain than just our experiences.

Even in a culture that venerates youth, pride is taken in being able to show our connection to the distant past.

Just this past week a young man told me at length about how his family is descended from President Benjamin Harrison of the late 1800s.

Several years ago, Pastor ChiEng Yuan of the Chinese Free church here in Denver told me that he has genealogical records of his family and their occupations dating back 900 years.

Peter wants his readers to know their salvation is not a recent invention.

Their faith is not based on some “flash-in-the-pan” religion thought up by a few men just recently.

Their faith, what they believe, has the weight of antiquity; hundreds of years earlier the prophets foretold it.

But more importantly than the fact that your faith has origins that are thousands of years old is the fact that even that long ago, **the prophets knew that this salvation was so valuable** that they “searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances” when this salvation would be revealed.

Like a president or a king, most of us know that a prophet is a pretty important person.

People will brag about meeting a famous person (have I told you that I met with Mother Theresa in Calcutta and shook her hand?) and we’d undoubtedly brag if we actually met an OT prophet.

Peter’s point is that **you are more privileged** than those great prophets of antiquity.

They longed to know the timing and circumstances or who exactly would be the Messiah that they were foretelling.

But they knew they wouldn’t have that great privilege; it would be us. We are the ones who would see the fulfillment of those prophecies;

We would have the historical perspective to know that Jesus is the Messiah, that he would not only suffer death for us, but that he would also be glorified in his resurrection and ascension.

You are part of something that has been going on for well over 4000 years.

Your **spiritual** genealogy goes back through Jonathan Edwards (1700s), John Calvin (1500s) Wycliffe (1300s), Anselm (1000s), Augustine (300s), The Apostle Paul, the Apostle John, Isaiah (800 B.C.), David (1000 B.C.), Moses (1500 B.C.), and Abraham (2000 B.C.).

II. Not only does Peter draw attention to the roots of our salvation, but he also draws attention to the value the angels attribute to our salvation.

For he writes, “Even angels long to look into these things.”

We tend to value what others value.

We especially value what significant others value.

We most value what those we value most value.

Advertisers spend billions based on that premise.

If Tiger Woods, Shaquille O’Neil, Bill Gates or Warren Buffet think it is good then we tend so as well.

Peter says **the angels** of heaven “long to look into these things.”

They are like wedding guests who strain to get a peek at the bride as she enters. (McKnight, *1 Peter*, 74)

Maybe you’ve never met an angel or more likely, been aware that you did.

But the Bible describes angels as mighty beings created by God that do his bidding.

Their beauty and their ability surpass anything we might imagine of ourselves, limited as we are by time and space.

Now consider that these awesome beings are **impressed with our salvation**.

Can you imagine having Albert Einstein jealous of your intellect, having YoYo Ma jealous of your ability on a musical instrument or Michael Jordan jealous of your athletic ability?

The angels are jealous of the salvation that we experience.

They will never experience the grace and joy that is ours of being so lost and then being lovingly found.

The angels were present at every significant event in Jesus' life?

At the time of the announcements of Jesus' birth to Joseph and to Mary.

At the birth itself, announced to the shepherds and others.

At Jesus' temptations in the desert.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, at the time of his death

At his resurrection

At his ascension

And they will be present at his return!

But the angels are servants not sons.

But we are sons and daughters: 1 John 3:1 "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

One man wrote, "Though the world may think Christians insignificant and worthy of pity and scorn, angels, who see ultimate reality from God's perspective – (angels) find (Christians) to be objects of intense interest, for they know that these struggling believers are actually the recipients of God's greatest blessings and honored participants in a great drama at the focal point of universal history." (Grudem, *1 Peter*, 73)

III. Not only does Peter draw attention to the roots of our salvation in the Prophets and the value of our salvation in the eyes of the angels, but he also draws attention to the certainty of our salvation because of the superintending work of the Holy Spirit.

This gospel message that we believe, this relationship we have with God in Jesus Christ, has the Holy Spirit of God working through every detail of it.

1 Peter 1:11-12 The prophets were “trying to find out the time and circumstances to which **the Spirit of Christ in them** was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was **revealed to them** that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you **by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven**.

Peter says I want you to realize that **the same Holy Spirit** whom Jesus promised would come after his ascension,
 the same Holy Spirit who did in fact come into us at Pentecost,
 the same Holy Spirit who indwells every Christ-follower
is the very same Holy Spirit who worked in the OT prophets to predict what they did about Jesus’ sufferings and glory.

2 Peter 1:19-21 “And we **have the word of the prophets made more certain**, and...you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

It is that very same Holy Spirit who guarantees the words of the gospel message you have heard,
 who opened your heart to believe,
 who now works in you to follow Christ
 and who is the guarantee of your future.

How certain is this salvation that is yours?

It is as certain as the Holy Spirit of God who has superintended it from eternity past and will do so into eternity future.

So how important, how valuable, how precious is your salvation, your relationship with God through Christ?

How do you help a kid realize the privileges they enjoy and the cost to others of what they have?

How do you help an American appreciate the value of living in a free country and the price others paid to provide such freedom?

How do you help a Christian realize the incredible value of their salvation so that they will live each day with an awareness of it?

There are some of us who live each day as if we were going to live forever,

as if this life is all there is, chasing entertainment and pleasure
as if that is what gives life meaning,
and investing little or nothing in our own soul or in the kingdom of God.

Some of us, at best, treat our salvation as if it is a commodity we purchased some time ago by saying we believe the right thing,

but live as if it is currently irrelevant;
we put our salvation in some compartment in our mind
expecting to take it out someday when we need it.

But this salvation, this relationship with God is the most precious thing we will ever have.

Jesus called it the pearl of great price.

He said it is a cause of rejoicing greater than finding a lost sheep, a lost coin or a lost son.

Without it:

Our past would be irrelevant,

Ecclesiastes 1:11 “There is no remembrance of men of old and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

Without it our present would be insignificant –

Ecclesiastes 2:11 “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

And without it our future would be disaster”

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will

be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.”

Stuart Briscoe tells of being at the first Lausanne, Switzerland International Congress on World Evangelism.

At the same time there was another church conference being held in Geneva, Switzerland.

A Washington reporter covering the two conferences said, *“You need an ambassador doing shuttle diplomacy between Lausanne and Geneva. He should help the church decide whether human beings are eternally valid. Many of those guys in Geneva don’t believe that there is such a thing as hell. They believe basically in the here and now, so they concentrate on material things, on earthly considerations. But you guys up here believe that people have souls, you believe in heaven, in hell, you believe in salvation. So, of course, you are concerned about the eternal destiny of people. The Christian church must decide what she believes. Do people have souls? Do they have eternal consequence? Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? Is there sin, is there forgiveness, is the cross meaningful, is there **salvation** or isn’t there? Because if there is, get your act together and get serious. And if there isn’t, put up the shutters and become a social agency.”* (Briscoe, *When the Going gets Tough*, 41-2)

What does the world have to offer?

They offer either Pollyannish wishful thinking or despair.

God offers salvation – the forgiveness of our sins and life in relationship with him forever.

This salvation defines who we now are – children of the most high God!

This salvation defines our future – “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

And we can withstand anything this world throws at us when we have a clear enough picture of the future and a strong enough conviction of its reality.

Hebrews 12:2-4 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

And when we understand this salvation it will define every aspect of our lives.

Next week Pastor Dan Luebcke will lead us into the next verses, a call to holy living.

But please remember that this call to holy living only makes sense in the light of this great salvation that is now ours.

1 Peter 1:3-10 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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