

Subject: *The Wonder of Salvation*

Scripture: *1 Peter 1:3-10*

Peter begins this letter by reminding believers of the blessings of salvation. He refers to salvation in verses 5, 9, and 10. Salvation is the greatest work of God, even greater than creation. When God created, He merely spoke and it was done, but salvation involved so much more: God made the plan to save; Christ left heaven and came to earth to save; He lived a perfect life and died on the cross to save us from our sins; He rose from the grave to prove He was God's Son and that His sacrifice was sufficient to save us. God sent the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and open our spiritual eyes to see our need of salvation. He worked in our heart to repent of our sin and believe in Christ as our Lord and Savior and salvation was then given to us as a free gift. All of that was involved in our salvation.

Salvation has been called the grandest theme in the Bible because it encompasses eternity as well as the present, it relates to all men everywhere, it is the main theme of the Old and New Testaments, and it focuses on the greatest person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is a broad, inclusive term that describes the rescue and deliverance of sinners from the penalty and bondage of their sins. Salvation includes three stages: past, present, and future. Christians have been saved from the penalty of sin; we are being saved from the power of sin; and we will be saved from the presence and possibility of sin. Salvation is a magnificent work of God. It is the greatest blessing to those who receive it, and it is the greatest loss to those who reject it or neglect it.

Hebrews 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

Peter refers to last stage of salvation in verse 5. He refers to the entire process of salvation in verse 9. In verses 10-12 Peter examines the wonder of salvation from the viewpoint of four divine agents who were involved with the message of salvation.

1. Salvation was studied and described by the Old Testament prophets

The prophets were God's Old Testament spokesmen who inquired and searched diligently and who prophesied of the grace that would eventually come to Christians in Peter's day. They wrote of God's promised salvation and then studied the meaning of their own writings to know all they could about this salvation. Prophets spoke about different things: the sins of the people and the need to repent; future judgments and promises; but the truth of salvation was their greatest passion. From Moses to Malachi, all the OT prophets were captivated by God's promise of salvation.

They not only studied about salvation, but they actually obtained it. They received the gift of salvation without seeing its full completion in the life and ministry of Christ. They wrote of Christ but they never fully comprehended all that was involved in His life, death, and resurrection. The focus of their study was the grace of God that would come to sinners through Christ (vs. 10). They knew that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. They knew that salvation is the work of God and grace is the motive for saving sinners. They knew that the grace of salvation would reach beyond the Jews to all people everywhere.

The grace that would come to believers in the NT was also given in the OT. We read in Genesis 6:8, that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Moses was aware of that grace:

Exodus 33:18-19 ¹⁸ And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. ¹⁹ And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. *Exodus 34:6* And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

Jonah knew about God's grace, even though he struggled to accept God's grace toward the wicked people of Nineveh:

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.

So the OT prophets understood God's grace and even received it, but they wrote about the fullness of grace that would come when Christ came to earth. They wrote about a future display of God's grace that was so much greater than anything yet known. They inquired and searched diligently about the person of Christ and the time when He would come. As Jesus told His disciples:

Matthew 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

If the OT prophets inquired and studied about the salvation that was yet to come, then it ought to be just as important if not more important to believers now who have the complete Bible.

2. Salvation was revealed by the Holy Spirit

The prophecies of the OT were revealed and recorded under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ (Holy Spirit) was in them and directed them to write about salvation and Christ's coming, but they could not comprehend it all. They were predicting things they could not see, things that came to pass long after they were dead. But the Holy Spirit ensured that what they wrote was accurate and eventually was fulfilled. Their writings about Christ focused on two things (vs. 11): the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. In other words they wrote much about the death of Christ as the perfect sacrifice for sins and the resurrection of Christ which led to His ascension and exaltation in heaven.

3. Salvation was preached by the apostles

After Christ died, rose, and ascended to heaven, the NT apostles preached that Jesus fulfilled all that the prophets had written. The same Holy Spirit who enabled the OT prophets to write of salvation in Christ also empowered the NT apostles to preach salvation in Christ. For example, many years before he wrote his two letters (1 and 2 Peter), the apostle Peter preached about salvation on the day of Pentecost. In his sermon Peter showed that Christ fulfilled what the prophets had written. When the people heard his message they asked what they should do.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Paul illustrates the single-minded devotion the apostles had when they preached the message of salvation in Christ:

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

4. Salvation is examined by the angels

Believers sometimes wonder what the angels in heaven know and experience. We would like to experience the holiness and glory of heaven and be in the immediate presence of God as they are and wonder what that must be like. But in our text we see that angels wonder about the nature of salvation and what it is like for sinners to be saved and forgiven by God's grace in salvation. They are looking with fascination into the wonder of salvation. Peter describes this strong desire of the angels to look with intensity and examine the things pertaining to salvation. This is not a casual curiosity but a strong passion they have to look deeply and understand the salvation they have never experienced. They look into the things of salvation, as those who are standing on the outside looking in.

The Bible describes two kinds of angels: the holy angels and the fallen (evil) angels. The holy angels do not need to be saved, and the fallen angels cannot be saved. Salvation is something they do not know personally, but they want to learn more. And that makes sense when you think about what angels are created to do—worship and glorify God. The angels have been involved in God's plan of salvation and have been amazed at what they've seen:

They announced Christ's birth, ministered to Him in His times of temptation, stood by the grave when He rose from the dead, were present when He ascended into heaven, and now serve Him by ministering to all believers. Angels rejoice when sinners repent and are saved. Though angels are not saved they worship and praise God for His work of salvation:

Revelation 5:11-12 ¹¹ *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;* ¹² *Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.*

Angels see believers when they are saved and wonder, "How can God take away the guilt and stain of their sin?"

Angels welcome believers when they die and go to Heaven, and they wonder, "Why would God allow these sinners to enter this perfect place?"

Angels know the power of God, the wisdom of God, and the holiness of God, but they have never experienced the grace of God.

No matter how difficult life's trials are, Christians can face them even with joy because of God's grace in a salvation that the prophets studied, the Holy Spirit inspired, the apostles preached, and the angels continue to investigate. That's the wonder of salvation.