*Serving Others, Not Yourself*

1 Peter 1:10-12

10/29/22

 As we return to 1 Peter this morning, it would be good to do a quick review. 1:3-12 serve as the introduction to the letter, laying a vital foundation that everything else is built upon. So far, we have observed two things in these verses. First, Peter called us to worship God for providing salvation through Jesus in vs. 3-5. It is a complete salvation provided through His death and resurrection. From Him we have obtained an eternal inheritance, as God keeps us by His power until the day of Christ’s return. Then, in vs. 6-9, Peter focused on how his readers were participants in this salvation. Although they were suffering for their faith, this hardship could not rob them of their joy in Christ. Rather, suffering proved the quality of their faith, which was a source of inexpressible joy, for they knew that in the end, their souls would be saved.

 Peter is laying the foundation of the gospel. We are saved because a gracious God sent His Son into the world to be our Savior. As a man, Jesus lived the sinless life we have failed to live, died the death we deserved for our sin, and then rose from the dead, securing eternal life for all who come to Him. The Spirit applies Jesus’ saving work to all who believe. We must remember these truths in a letter focused on how we live in a world opposed to us. Obedience is the exercise of our salvation, not the means of it.

 Before Peter begins to focus on how salvation transforms our behavior, there is one final truth he wants to draw to our attention. God has been working throughout history to bring your salvation to pass. Whether we are reading our bibles, studying history, or looking at current world events, we need to see these things through the lens of God’s ongoing work to save a people for Himself from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

 In vs. 10-12, Peter shows how God worked in the past to bring about the present salvation we enjoy. He does this by focusing on the prophets. The first thing we see is how God used the prophets to predict the ministry of Christ. The text describes this ministry in two ways. First, it speaks of how they *prophesied of the grace that would come.* The OT prophets did not have the full picture of God’s salvation plan. They knew a Savior would come to break the curse and provide salvation from their sin; but their knowledge of who that would be and how it would happen was limited. They could see Christ dimly, as through a shadow. From these shadows they proclaimed the grace of God, knowing that salvation is a gift of God’s grace, not by works.

 Not only did they understand that salvation was by grace, but they also understood it would come through the suffering and glorification of the Messiah. The prophets predicted this in various ways. Isaiah was the clearest on the Messiah’s suffering, describing His rejection by the Jews and suffering for sin in very clear terms. But he also described His victory over sin and death. The other prophets add their witness, giving various details about the life and ministry of the Messiah. As we study the gospels, we see Jesus fulfilling all that the prophets had written.

 In addition to the prophets predicting the ministry of the Messiah, they also sought to understand what God was revealing to them. They made careful searches and inquiries into the prophesies of the coming grace, for they wanted to know the person and timing of what they prophesied. The prophets were not content to state God’s truth. They wanted to understand who they were describing and how these events would unfold. Therefore, they made careful searches, studying the Scriptures to understand what God planned to do. They also made inquiries. This means they asked questions and sought answers through study of God’s word and prayer. Finally, they sought to know how God’s grace would come through the Messiah. They wanted to comprehend the glory of God’s grace extended through the Savior.

 This is instructive to us. The prophets carefully examined the promises and prophesies of God trying to understand the ministry of the Messiah; yet they were limited in their knowledge because God was still unfolding His salvation plan. They wrestled with shadows and types. We have a decided advantage over them, for we know who the Messiah is and how the events that secured our salvation unfolded. Furthermore, we have the NT to explain these things to us. If the prophets labored diligently to understand God’s grace, how much more ought we seek to understand it? Our lives ought to be wrapped up in understanding the glorious grace of God demonstrated in Jesus, allowing His grace to transform our lives.

 So first, we see that God used the prophets to announce the coming Messiah. Next, we see that they sought to understand who this person would be and when He would come. Third, we see that the Messiah’s life was one of suffering that resulted in glory. The prophets first predicted the suffering of Christ. As Savior, Jesus entered time and space to *carry our griefs and to bear our sorrows.* When we think of Christ’s suffering, we tend to focus on the cross, where it reached its climax; but the prophets predicted, and the four gospels describe a life of suffering for the Savior. Then, it culminated at the cross as Jesus received the stroke of God’s justice that was due to us for our sin. Isaiah described the Savior’s sufferings in this way: He was pierced through for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. The Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and afflicted and taken away to execution. The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; He would render Him as a guilt offering. It was through the anguish of His soul that God’s wrath was satisfied, making it possible for Him to look on us with favor. He suffered in our place so we could be reconciled to God.

 Yet His suffering was followed by glory, for Jesus rose from the grave. His glory is displayed through His victory over sin, Satan, and death. It is seen in His power over the grave and triumphal return to heaven. His glory is seen in His ability to save all who believe in Him and to keep them for the final day of their salvation. His glory will be seen fully and finally when He returns to the earth as the conquering King. Jesus was willing to subject Himself to short-term pain in order to achieve the eternal display of God’s glory.

 We need to think carefully about the relationship between suffering and glory, for it is key to the message of 1 Peter. The text tells us that the suffering of Christ preceded the glories that were to follow. Jesus said suffering was necessary for Him to enter into His glory (Lk. 24:26). This is described in Philippians 2, where Jesus emptied Himself by becoming a man and humbled Himself all the way to the cruel death of the cross. Because of it, God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name above every name. He suffered; therefore, God exalted Him. Although Jesus’ suffering was more intense than any suffering any else has ever experienced, He understood that it was temporary. After suffering, He would enter the fulness of His glory. This is why the author of Hebrews could write *for the joy set before Him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* The joy was not the suffering, but what the suffering would accomplish.

 Peter’s readers were also suffering. By rehearsing the gospel, Peter is pointing them to the imperishable, undefiled, and unfading inheritance they have received. Yes, their faith was being tested by fire, but the result was to be praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Their suffering mirrored their Savior’s. In the same way Jesus overcame sin and death to enter His glory, they too would overcome sin and death and enter into the glory He has prepared for them. This truth sustains us in suffering, for these momentary, light afflictions are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory that is ours in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Yes, in this world we will have trouble; but take heart for Christ has overcome the world! Glory awaits us in eternity, where pain and suffering have no place.

 Next, notice how many agents God used to bring us the gospel. Vs. 12 says that it was revealed to the prophets that they were not serving themselves, but you. God gave them prophesies, not so they could know, but so that they could announce these things to us. Ministry does not exist for the benefit of the minister. The minister exists for the good of those whom they serve. The prophets’ ministries were for us, so that we might know the excellencies of God.

 Not only did the prophets serve us, but so did those who preached the gospel to us. The message of Christ has been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you. Peter’s original audience heard the gospel because someone brought them the message. Like the prophets before them, they did not do this for their personal benefit, but for the eternal good of those whom they served.

 Thirdly, the Holy Spirit played a vital role in bringing salvation to us. It was the Spirit of Christ who gave the prophets their message. Those who announced the gospel did so *by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.* Both the prophets and the gospel heralds of the NT were instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit to make known the grace of God. The Spirit is a gift from God given for our benefit. He was sent to be our instructor, convicter, and guide. We considered back in 1:2 how the Holy Spirit is active in the process of salvation. Here we see His ministry on our behalf further unfolded.

This shows us the greatness and grandeur of our sovereign God; He has been working throughout history, raising up prophets and preachers and moving by His Spirit to bring us salvation. This is all to the praise of His glorious grace.

 Finally, notice how the passage ends. Not only did the prophets seek to understand God’s salvation purposes, but the angels in heaven also long to look into these things. The angels long to understand the workings of salvation. Nothing reveals the character of God or displays His glory more fully than His provision of salvation through His Son. The angels long to understand these things, for in understanding them, they understand the glory of God. The more we gaze on the greatness of God, the more His praises will flow from us.

 Let me close by drawing two applications. First, if both the prophets and angels long to understand the glory of God displayed in the salvation He provides through Jesus, then we too should long to understand these things. We should make careful inquires and searches in God’s word to understand the fullness of what God has done. We want this, not to satisfy the idle curiosities of an inquisitive mind, but because understanding the gospel is the gateway to understanding God. Do you meditate on His word and seek to understand its meaning and implications for your life? We should. A regular portion of our time should be spent in deepening our knowledge of the God who made Himself known to us through His Son.

 If you are not a believer, you ought to make a careful inquiry into the things we are talking about, for your soul hangs in the balance. If Jesus is who He claimed to be and did what the Bible says He did, then you better carefully consider the merits of these things. Only Christ can save you from your sin. So, search carefully to see if Jesus really is who the bible claims He is; if He is, then turn to Him in faith and be reconciled to God.

 The second observation I want to make flows from the prophets serving not themselves, but us. Their ministry was for our benefit. Similarly, Jesus came into the world, not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. Then He called and equipped men and women to preach the gospel to us. From the beginning of creation until today, God has had an unbroken line of people holding forward the light of salvation, calling people to believe. Yes, sometimes the remnant grew very small, but God has always had His people. These people served not themselves, but us, stewarding the grace God gave them for our benefit. It is a joy and privilege to take our place in the long line of God’s people holding forward the gospel for the benefit of others. We do not exist as members of His church to be served, but to serve others, giving our lives for the cause of the gospel among the nations. Are you a spiritual provider, or a spiritual consumer?

 I love the line in the hymn we are going to close our service with that says *we bear the torch that flaming fell from the hands of those who gave their lives proclaiming that Jesus died and rose. From cowardice defend us, from lethargy awake! Forth on thy errands send us to labor for thy sake.* Others served you to bring you to Christ. Who are you serving in the same cause? May we be those who do not serve themselves, but others, that they might learn the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.