

“The Mystery of Our Salvation”

1 Peter 1:10-12

Desmond Doss was a United States Army corporal who served as a combat medic during World War II. He was twice awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroic actions in Guam and Philippines. Most notable, however, were his actions in the Battle of Okinawa where one by one, he saved the lives of 75 men. It is even more amazing when you consider the fact that he refused to carry a weapon due to his Seventh-Day Adventist upbringing. He became the only ‘conscientious objector’ to ever receive the Medal of Honor. His story was the subject of a major Hollywood film a couple of years ago, called “Hacksaw Ridge.” Corporal Doss was wounded four times in Okinawa, suffered a left arm fracture from a sniper’s bullet, and at one point had 17 pieces of shrapnel embedded in his body. Armed with nothing but his Bible, he carried his wounded comrades to safety, one by one, through enemy fire, and was overheard repeating each time, “Lord, help me get one more.”

It truly is an amazing thing to save a life. Such stories of salvation and rescue grip our hearts, especially when they involve sacrifice. One who risks himself to save another in effect sacrificially offers up his own life to do so. We find that amazing and awe-inspiring. Jesus said:

John 15:13—“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

And as those who trust in Jesus Christ, this is our story. Salvation is the message of the Bible. We are in need of rescue and Jesus is our Divine Rescuer. Salvation is a key word here in this first chapter of 1 Peter.

From the very first book of the Bible through the last book, this theme of salvation and redemption in Christ is found throughout—on every page, in every chapter, and in every book. The Bible is a book of salvation. All of Scripture is really one story—the story of God’s glory and humanity’s need of His grace.

The Bible has influenced our world far more than we realize. Each year, there are more than 25 million copies of the Bible sold in the United States, and around 100 million copies sold around the world. Another 400 million copies of all or part of the Scriptures are distributed by the United Bible Societies. It is a Book of salvation. It is God’s revelation of Himself to humanity made in His image, and it reveals the great lengths He has gone through to rescue His sinful, fallen creatures.

Once a person understands the focus and intent of the Scripture and sees how it points to Christ, only then will they truly begin to crave it as living water and satisfying bread for their hungry soul. The Bible is made up of many different parts, yet it is unified and whole in its message.

The Bible was written by 40 different writers over 15 centuries. There is a remarkable diversity found within the Bible, yet there is also a seamless unity. The sum total of its message points us to faith in Jesus Christ. Of all the reasons we should read and study Scripture, the supreme reason is to know, worship, and obey Jesus Christ. He is the center to which everything in Scripture is united and bound together.

To see how this is so, we come to these three verses from the pen of the apostle Peter. We’ve already seen that in the opening verses of his book, Peter is writing to some hurting believers about their salvation. Even though they were living

under persecution for their Christian faith, they possessed a living hope that is centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Now in verses 10-12, Peter reflects upon the character of Scripture. He lets his readers know that the salvation he has been describing was the subject of the Old Testament prophets who wrote its 39 books as they were inspired by God's Spirit. It is the same message preached by the apostles, who were inspired by the Spirit to write the 27 books of the New Testament.

The gospel as we know it was revealed to the prophets in shadow, but is now made plain through the coming of Jesus. The cross is not simply one more story in some long anthology full of unrelated stories. No, the cross is the pinnacle of redemption history. It is the central theme to which all the others point, and here in this passage Peter wants us to know just how this is so. According to Peter, the mystery of our salvation involves four things:

1. The subject of prophetic INVESTIGATION (1:10)

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully.”

Concerning this salvation, that is, the salvation that he has just described in the preceding verses. This salvation whereby we have been chosen by God the Father, purchased by God the Son, and set apart by God the Holy Spirit. This salvation whereby His great mercy, God has caused us to be 'born again' to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

This salvation includes an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Peter says this inheritance is “kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation to be revealed in the last

time.” All of this is to be the cause of our rejoicing as believers, because even though we suffer, such suffering is momentary.

Peter says trials in life serve the purpose of testing the genuineness of our faith which is more precious than gold refined by fire. The end result of this salvation is praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom even though we have not yet seen with our own two eyes, we love. The love that we have for Him is a tangible expression of our faith in Him, and the outcome of this faith is the salvation of our souls.

Peter says, “Concerning **this** salvation—the one that I’ve just described—the prophets who prophesied about this grace that is now ours sought and inquired.”

The prophets of the Old Testament were the spokesmen to whom God revealed His Word. The word ‘prophesied’ carries the idea of foretelling future events pertaining to the kingdom of God; it is to utter forth a thing which can only be known by divine revelation.

The Old Testament prophet was not a preacher of his own opinion. Rather, he was responsible for declaring the whole counsel of God as it had been revealed to him by God.

Hosea 12:10 - “I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables.”

Amos 3:7 - “For the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets.”

Hebrews 1:1 - “Long ago, and many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets...”

Notice that Peter says that these prophets who prophesied, those to whom God revealed His truth, they ‘inquired’ about the grace that is ours in Jesus Christ. He uses two very important words to describe the level of their interest.

“Searched” - *word is ‘ekzeteo’ and means to seek out; to exert considerable effort and care in learning something*

“Inquired” - *means to thoroughly investigate; was first used to tell of a dog sniffing something out with his nose*

The truth that Peter is getting at here is that the prophets made a careful and diligent search into what had been revealed to them about the promise of a Savior who would come. In other words, they were hot on the trail. Like a hound, the prophets were sniffing out the ‘scarlet thread’ that God was progressively revealing throughout history.

Notice second that Peter says salvation is:

2. The theme of divine REVELATION (1:11-12a)

“inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them...”

Notice that the prophets inquired as to the person or time of this Savior. The NIV says that they were “trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing.” The idea being expressed is that the prophets searched both about the person of the Messiah as well as the time and circumstances in which He would appear.

In other words, they wanted to know “who” He would be and “when” He would come. Much in the same way that we are interested in the truth of the second

coming, the prophets were interested in the truth of His first coming. Who would this Promised One be, and when would He step onto the scene?

Israel's prophets longed to see and experience the fulfillment of what they wrote about, yet God "revealed" to them that their prophecies would not be realized in their day.

This is one of the most profound verses that you will find anywhere, for it describes the nature of inspiration. The Spirit of Christ in them predicted the sufferings of Christ and subsequent glories.

The Bible is a book written by numerous authors over a period of hundreds of years, yet at the same time it is the Word of God. The Bible is a book that has been 'inspired' by God's Spirit. This is not the same thing as the modern usage of the term, such as a painter who was 'inspired' to paint by a beautiful sunset.

2 Timothy 3:16 - "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."

"Inspiration" - word is *'theopneustos'* which literally means *breathed out by God*

Divine inspiration means that Scripture has God as its source. Peter will say even more about this later on:

2 Peter 1:20-21 - "Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

That doesn't mean that the personality and backgrounds of the human authors were denied, but that they were used by God. It means that the ultimate source of every prophecy was never a man's decision about what he wanted to write,

but rather the Holy Spirit's action and superintendence in the prophet's life. The wrote as they were moved along by the Spirit of God.

Notice that Peter also refers to Him as the 'Spirit of Christ.'

He says the Spirit of Christ inspired the prophets of the Old Testament to write about the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories that would follow.

Peter speaks of the sufferings of Christ no less than five times in the book. That is important because the believers to whom he writes were experiencing their share of suffering. He doesn't want them to be under the impression that their pain was going unnoticed. Rather, they were the privileged recipients of a salvation that was made available all because of a Savior who suffered on their behalf. And His suffering was the theme of Old Testament revelation.

Thus, you can find Jesus Christ in every part of the Old Testament scriptures; it all points to His suffering and glory.

Luke 24:25-27 - "And He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

He believed that He was the **subject** of the Old Testament!

Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is nothing short of breathtaking. In at least 322 places, these Jewish prophets wrote hundreds of years before Christ's birth, and predicted specific details about His life, such as:

- that He would be born in Bethlehem

- that He would be from the tribe of Judah and the ancestral lineage of King David
- that He would flee to Egypt as a child
- that He would begin His ministry in Galilee
- that He would perform miracles and teach in parables
- that He would enter Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey
- that He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver
- that He would die by crucifixion between thieves
- that He would be resurrected from the dead and asked to the right hand of God the Father

What was the role of the Holy Spirit pre-Pentecost? Peter says that He had a ministry that pointed forward to the coming of Christ incarnate. And now that we live post-Pentecost, the Spirit now resides in us to empower the witness of the church, so that Jesus Christ and His gospel can be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. Jesus Himself said that this would be so:

John 14:26—“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 15:26—“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is such that no matter if you open your Bible to the Old Testament prophets or to the writings of the New Testament apostles, the Holy Spirit's purpose is to testify of Christ.

Third, Peter says that salvation is:

3. The purpose of gospel PROCLAMATION (1:12b)

“It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...”

Peter says that it was revealed to the prophets by the Holy Spirit that they were writing about something that went far beyond themselves and their lifetimes. Though they had specific things to say to their generation, their ministry was not ultimately directed to themselves or their own generation but to those who live on this side of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Peter says that they were not serving themselves, but those to whom the gospel has now been fully announced. That's us!

What was contained then in shadow has now been fully revealed. What was concealed in the Old Testament has now been fully revealed in the New Testament. What was once only seen in type and shadow is clearly and fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Notice Peter refers to “those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” It is a reference to Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out on the church to bear witness to Jesus Christ. Peter is drawing a distinction between the prophets who anticipated the gospel and the apostles who announced the gospel.

Just as the Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament prophets, so also did He inspire the apostles to write in the New Testament era. It was to the apostles that the truth of the gospel had been fully revealed, and this was the focus of their preaching. They were eyewitnesses of the truth.

We can consider the example of Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost in the second chapter Acts. No less than three times in his sermon does he quote from the Old Testament to show how Jesus is its perfect fulfillment.

The writers of the New Testament were either apostles or the close associates of the apostles, such as Mark and Luke. In the gospels and Acts, they show us who Jesus is and what He has done to save us from *sin's penalty*. In the epistles, they show us the truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus and how He is saving us from *sin's power*. And in Revelation, the apostle John shows us that the kingdom belongs to Jesus and that He is one day coming again to save us from even *sin's presence*.

Taken together, Isaiah and Amos, Peter and Paul, Moses or Matthew, Jeremiah or James, all were inspired by the Spirit to write things concerning this salvation in Christ that has now been revealed, the subject of which the whole Bible concerns itself.

The apostle Paul said it this way:

Ephesians 2:18-22—“For through [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined

together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

What is the application, then? The application is this—realize that you live in an amazing time in history, a time of prophetic fulfillment. Peter’s point is that you and I now live in a privileged time in which prophecy has been fulfilled. Think about how encouraging this would have been to those struggling Christians, who might have been entertaining thoughts that they had been forgotten and abandoned by the One they had come to trust in. No, they were not forgotten. They were blessed! They were in a better position than the prophets before them.

The next time you are tempted to complain about your circumstances, why not stop for a second and thank God that you were born in the 20th century A.D. and not the 20th century B.C.

The least disciple of Jesus today is in a better, more privileged position to understand the Old Testament revelation than the greatest prophet before Jesus ever came. Peter says that we are privileged recipients of:

“...things into which angels long to look.”

If angels who live in the presence of God are curious enough to look with longing and keen interest into our salvation, how much more so should we! Nothing is more important in life than our salvation in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews refers to it as our “great” salvation.

Honestly, that word ‘great’ is thrown around so much today that we don’t think about the seriousness of the word. It has almost lost its meaning. We talk about everything from the Great Lakes to the Great Barrier Reef, to google searches for

great vacation spots or great restaurants. You can even go to Great Clips to get your hair cut (though I'm sure that there is some false advertisement going on there). My point is that in many cases, the word 'great' is an overstatement.

Not when it is used to describe our 'great' salvation!

How grateful to God are you for so great a salvation? The truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ ought to grip our hearts more than anything else. It should cause believing hearts to well up with worship and passionate devotion to this Savior who has done so much for us and is far more infinite and glorious than we can possibly imagine.

Angels are interested in our salvation, but we are often not.

If you are the kind of person that has to be entertained to show up with consistency at church on Sunday, then you fail to realize something about the **weightiness** of salvation truth. You're totally oblivious and uninterested in the glory of God revealed in the person of His Son. Our sinful hearts deceive us into becoming mesmerized by the fool's gold of this temporal world. Like C.S. Lewis said:

"It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

Don't let an angel be more interested in your salvation than you are, my friend.

Fourth, Peter says that in response to the salvation we have been given in Christ, we must understand:

4. The necessity of active PARTICIPATION (1:13a)

“Therefore, preparing your minds for action...”

Peter has sought to increase our appreciation of so great a salvation in Jesus Christ, but not so that we can sit on our hands and do nothing with it. I'll say more about this next week, but the idea here is that our salvation impacts the way we think, the way we live, and the things we now live for. Our salvation is a means to an end, the end of which is the glory of God and participation in His mission.

Our problem so often in the church is that we confuse the means with the end. We think that just because we are saved, we can live for ourselves as we passively wait for heaven. Not so! We have work to do.

Conclusion:

May the truth of salvation grip our minds and hearts like never before! May it bring us to our knees in humble, passionate worship, and may it send us out to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the millions and millions of those who have yet to hear or believe. There are a whole lot of people who have yet to hear and understand this gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ. You and I are given the responsibility to share it with them!

Listen again to what Peter says in verse 10—“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that is yours searched and inquired carefully.” What an awesome statement. Grace that is yours.

What are we going to do in response to what we have been given in Christ?

Think about it, in gratitude to God for salvation:

- What if you determined through the help of God’s Spirit to read the Bible to know and worship Jesus better?
- What if you determined to no longer be content merely sitting on a pew, but being actively involved in ministry?
- What if you determined to pray for lost people and to share the gospel with at least one lost person a week?

Our ministry as a local church must be viewed as a means to an end—that all people may know Him.

Daniel Doriani—*“Scripture contains a great many things, but in essence it describes our creation in God’s image, our rebellion and its catastrophic consequences, and then God’s plan for restoration, announced by the prophets, and accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Before him we must repent, and in him we must believe. Every other theme is secondary.”*

In a world where you and I are literally bombarded by hundreds of messages on any given day, no message can be compared with the message of salvation. We can’t even begin to plumb its vast depths.

What can I do but simply yield my life in total surrender?

Has the gospel changed your life personally? Have you been given this salvation that Peter so powerfully describes here? And if so, can you say that you are grateful for it? If not, then I urge you to repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ while you have sufficient opportunity.

Here is what you should do now:

- believe the gospel message immediately

- treasure the gospel message supremely
- spread the gospel message faithfully

And as a church that is grateful for the salvation we have been given, may God give us the passion of Corporal Desmond Doss when it comes to seeking the salvation of others— *“Lord, give us just one more!”*