

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

### REJOICING IN OUR SALVATION

Read 1 Peter 1:3-12

#### Introduction

The beginning of 1 Peter is a gourmet table featuring the greatness of Jesus' salvation. Peter seems to savour every aspect of salvation as he spells it out in the first 12 verses.

We see....

1. A **Trinitarian salvation** accomplished by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which we studied last week
2. A **future salvation** that we will experience when Christ returns,
3. An **inexpressible and glorious joy** we can have in salvation, even though we go through struggles, and
4. A **promise of salvation** into which prophets and angels long to look.

#### Cause for Rejoicing

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (vv3-5)*

When Peter considered the salvation of God, his immediate response was to simply praise Him. This is especially because the motive for God's work is found in Him, not in us (being according to His abundant mercy). Peter enumerates a number of things which should give us joy as Christians. Notice that as Peter lists them, they run together -- they can't be analysed in complete isolation from each other. I'll identify each with a word, but you fill in why this should give you joy.

- Abundant mercy
- New birth
- Living hope
- Resurrection from the dead
- Incorruptible (Imperishable) inheritance
- Protection by God's power
- Salvation revealed when Christ returns

**Abundant mercy** is a theme all of us can identify with. Someone once said, "Grace is getting what we don't deserve. Mercy is not getting what we do deserve." When I think of how much we fall short -- even the best of Christians -- I realize how much mercy God has towards us. We have impure thoughts and motives -- God shows mercy. We say and do unkind things -- God shows mercy. We sometimes commit terrible sins -- God shows mercy. He withholds the righteous judgment that we deserve. That, my friends, is abundant mercy.

**New Birth (Has begotten us again):** The new birth is a theme in 1 Peter. It occurs here, in 1:23, and in 2:2. The Greek verb used in 1:3 and 1:23 is *anagennaō*, "beget again, cause to be born again, figuratively of the

spiritual rebirth of Christians. Peter's idea is that when a person is saved, they are made a new creation (as in 2 Corinthians 5:17).

**Living Hope:** A living hope reminds us that we have an expectation for the future, based not on the great deeds of a fallen martyr, but in a living and risen Saviour. We are born again to a living hope because we have eternal life in a Saviour who has conquered death Himself. The hope lives because it is set upon an inheritance incorruptible that can never fade away because it is reserved in heaven. This is a significant contrast to any inheritance on this earth.

**Resurrection from the dead** is not just an historical event, but an astounding, paradigm-shattering miracle that both (1) identifies Jesus as Victor over death, whose words can be believed and relied upon, and (2) inspires in us a hope for life beyond mortal life. We look forward to our resurrection, too.

**Incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away:** Peter didn't really describe our inheritance. All he can tell us is what it is not. What our inheritance actually is something too great for him to describe. Yet we can know that our inheritance can't perish, it can't spoil, and it can't fade away. Our inheritance is like the inheritance of Aaron (Numbers 18:20) and the inheritance of the Psalmist (Psalm 16:5-6), which is the gift of God Himself. Since God gives Himself to us now, our inheritance begins here and now.

We cannot experience this inheritance unless we are born again. Unregenerate man does not have the capacity to enjoy this inheritance. It would be like rewarding a blind man by showing him the most beautiful sunset or taking him to an art museum.

**Who are kept by the power of God through faith:** The promise of our inheritance is certain because we are kept by the power of God. This enables us to endure through faith until the coming of Jesus. We can say God's power is the garrison in which we find our security. We are kept by the power of God, but it is through faith, meaning our faith. The person who is kept is a person abiding in a continuing relationship of faith with God. We could say that faith activates the preserving power of God in the life of the Christian.

**Salvation revealed when Christ returns:** It may be confusing to talk about salvation in the future. We normally think about it in the past when we have been rescued from our sins by God. Actually, our salvation can be looked at in several tenses:

- **Past** -- both Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, but also how he rescued us from our old way of life at our spiritual birth or spiritual awakening.
- **Present** -- a present activity of God on our behalf to help us in our present circumstances and rescue us from problems and persistent sins. Paul expressed it this way:

*"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)*

- **Future** -- when we receive all the benefits of our salvation. There will be a time when Christ returns that we will be completely rescued from our worldly existence and be fully immersed in his presence. In Revelation it is expressed,

*"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4)*

### Rejoicing in Spite of Suffering

*"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by*

*fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” (vv6-9)*

We especially rejoice in God’s keeping power when we are grieved by various trials, knowing that He will keep us as our faith is tested by fire. Sometimes it is thought that a strong Christian will never be grieved in a trial. The idea is that a Christian should be like Superman; though bullets are shot at Superman, they all bounce off of his chest. Yet Peter here tells us that there is a “need be” not only for the various trials, but more especially that there is a “need be” for being grieved itself. God has a purpose not only for the trial but also for the heavy grief we feel in the trial.

The phrase “various trials” literally, means ‘many-coloured’ and was used to describe ‘the skin of a leopard, the different-coloured veining of marble, or an embroidered robe.’ So, it is trials of various types.

**Faith... tested by fire:** Our faith isn’t tested because God doesn’t know how much or what kind of faith we have. It is tested because we often are ignorant of how much or what kind of faith we have. God’s purpose in testing is to display the enduring quality of our faith.

Someone said: “Indeed, it is the honour of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, ‘I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties?’ Who knows whether you have any faith? Shall a man say, ‘I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it?’ Is this to the honour and praise of your faith? Do you think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to you any great reward? If so, you are mightily mistaken.”

If gold is fit to be tested and purified by fire, then how much more our faith, which is far more precious than gold? God has a great and important purpose in testing our faith.

- Faith is tested to show that it is sincere faith or true faith.
- Faith is tested to show the strength of faith.
- Faith is tested to purify it, to burn away the dross from the gold.

Gold is one of the most durable of all materials. Yet it too will one day perish, but our faith will not.

**Receiving the end of your faith:** The end of your faith is the return of Jesus and the ultimate salvation of your souls. Testing and trials are inevitable as long as we are on this side of the end of your faith. As long as we do not see the God we serve we must endure through trials and face them with faith and joy.

The phrase “whom having not seen you love” does not apply to Peter. Peter knew that though he had seen Jesus (both before and after the resurrection), almost every Christian in the early church had not seen Jesus. Nevertheless, they loved Him. Jesus was no less real because they had not seen Him.

The word translated “joy inexpressible” “occurs only here in the New Testament and describes a joy so profound as to be beyond the power of words to express.”

### **The Witness of Prophets and Angels**

*“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been*

*reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven— things which angels desire to look into.” (vv10-12)*

It was important to Peter — and to all the New Testament writers — to demonstrate that their teaching was no novelty, but that it was testified beforehand by the prophets. Understanding this made salvation so much greater in the mind of Peter’s afflicted readers. The prophets of the Old Testament longed to see the grace of the New Covenant to come. Prophesying by the Spirit of Christ, they knew something of His sufferings and glories, but far less than they longed to know.

One may only imagine how excited Isaiah would have been to read the Gospel of John. The Old Testament prophets knew so much; yet much was hidden to them, including the character of the Church (Ephesians 3:4-6) and the very essence of life and immortality (2 Timothy 1:10).

Do you take your salvation for granted? You shouldn't. The Old Testament prophets found themselves speaking about this salvation by the Spirit. The kind of salvation you and I experience is much more complete, much greater than that experienced by even the greatest of the Old Testament prophets -- John the Baptist (Luke 7:28). The prophets tried to search out what this salvation was all about. How about you? Will you search out its meaning as diligently as the prophets who foretold it? Our salvation is great! It is glorious! It is even the subject of angelic speculation! Part of God’s eternal purpose is to show His wisdom to the angelic beings through His work with the church (Ephesians 3:10-11). God wants the angels to look in on what He does in the church, and the idea is that the angels are bending over with intense interest and desire to learn. And it is ours, a wonderful gift granted to us in whom God has sparked faith.