

# 1 & 2 Peter Bible Study

## Lesson 4 Notes

### On This Side of the Cross

#### Salvation was the Theme of the Prophet's Study

That great salvation is the heart of the apostle Peter's concern in this passage. He wanted his believing audience to focus on that full, final rescue from sin, Satan, death, and hell that God so graciously chose to give them through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Peter celebrates salvation's greatness by reminding his readers that no matter how difficult the circumstances or how severe the persecution, they can confidently hold to the hope of eternal salvation.

Peter examines the blessedness or greatness of salvation in his opening chapter of this letter from the viewpoint of four divine agents who were involved with the message of salvation: the Old Testament prophets who studied it, the Holy Spirit who inspired it, the New Testament apostles who preached it, and the angels who examined it. *"As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time"* (1:10–11a).

The apostle first draws attention to the salvation referred to in verse 9 from the viewpoint of the prophets. They were God's Old Testament spokesmen *"who prophesied of the grace that would come."* They then pursued the meaning of their own prophetic writings to know all they could about God's promised salvation. Of all the truth the prophets received through divine revelation (cf. Hos. 12:10; Amos 3:7; Heb. 1:1; James 5:10), the truth of salvation was their greatest passion. From Moses to Malachi, all of the Old Testament prophets were fascinated by the promises of salvation. However, they did not merely wish to receive that salvation; they actually obtained it. But they received the gift of God's salvation without seeing its full accomplishment (cf. Heb. 11:39–40), without seeing Jesus Christ or having a relationship with Him. Though the prophets wrote of Messiah, they never fully comprehended all that was involved in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

The focus of the prophets' intense study in trying to comprehend the person and work of Christ was centered **on the grace that would come** to sinners through Him. Salvation concerns primarily the divine act of saving sinners (cf. Matt. 20:28; Luke 24:46–47; John 12:32–33; Titus 3:7; Heb. 9:24–28), whereas grace encompasses the entire motive behind God's saving work (cf. Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:15; Eph. 2:5, 8–10; 2 Thess. 1:11–12). The prophets sought to understand God's grace and mercy in Christ, His forgiveness, goodness, unmerited favor, and blessing lavished on undeserving sinners. They knew that God's promise of a salvation by the grace that would come extended far beyond Israel to include people from every nation on earth (Isa. 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; cf. John 10:16; Rom. 15:9–12; 1 John 2:2; Rev. 4:8–10; 7:9).

It is crucial to emphasize that the phrase "*prophesied of the grace that would come*" does not indicate that the prophets looked forward to a saving grace that did not exist at all in Old Testament times. By nature God has always been an unchangeably gracious God (Ex. 34:6; Pss. 102:26–27; 116:5; James 1:17). In the Old Testament, He was gracious to those who believed before Christ came (cf. Ps. 84:11), and since then He is gracious to all who believe (John 1:14).

Salvation has always been available to sinners (Deut. 32:15; Pss. 3:8; 27:1; Isa. 55:1–2, 6–7; Jonah 2:9) and always and only by grace. So there was never any question during the Old Testament whether or not God was gracious, but the great manifestation of His grace would come with the arrival of His Son. Isaiah prophesied of it (Isa. 45:20–24). The prophet reveals God's provision of salvation for all the nations. Isaiah and the other prophets did not see that Gentile salvation realized (cf. Rom. 15:8–12; Eph. 3:4–7), but they knew Messiah would effect it (Isa. 53:4–5).

They wrote about a salvation grace that was far more extensive than anything they had observed (cf. Deut. 32:43; 2 Sam. 22:50; Pss. 18:49; 117:1; 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 11:1–5, 10; 28:16; 65:1–2; Jer. 17:7; Hos. 1:10; 2:23), and those prophecies contained several basic facts, some of which were later quoted by New Testament writers such as the apostle Paul (e.g., Rom. 9:25–26, 33; 10:11–13, 20; 15:8–12, 20–21). First, the prophecies declared that Messiah would suffer. Psalm 22 describes His crucifixion, and Isaiah 53 describes other details of His suffering. Second, the Old Testament writers prophesied that Messiah would triumph. Isaiah gave the Messiah's mandate: "*The Spirit*

*of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord”* (Isa. 61:1–2). Jesus read those words to the congregation in His hometown synagogue and proclaimed Himself the fulfillment of them (Luke 4:16–21).

Though the Old Testament prophets knew that their writings described a future manifestation of salvation grace, their desire to understand those prophecies was still so compelling and pervasive that they **made careful searches and inquiries** into their own writings. Those two terms emphasize the intensity with which the prophets had delved into their prophecies and the diligence with which they had investigated them to better understand the magnitude of salvation grace.

As Jesus told His disciples, *“For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it”* (Matt. 13:17; cf. Isa. 6:11; Hab. 1:2). Because the Old Testament prophets, including the last one, John the Baptist, were limited, they were all the more intent on studying their own writings to see the Messiah and comprehend the salvation He would bring.

They enquired and searched diligently. The words are strong and emphatic, alluding to miners, who dig to the bottom, and break through not only the earth, but the rock, to come to the ore. So these holy prophets had an earnest desire to know, and were proportionally diligent in their enquiries after the grace of God, which was to be revealed in the days of the Messiah. Their being inspired did not make their industrious search needless; for notwithstanding their extraordinary assistance from God, they were obliged to make use of all the ordinary methods of improvement in wisdom and knowledge. – Matthew Henry

Peter further indicates that the Old Testament prophets were not interested in just the general doctrine of salvation or the general teaching about Messiah. They sought to know more precisely **what person** would come as savior, judge, prophet, priest, and king, and during what season or era (time) that coming would occur. The queries were about who and when John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet and forerunner of Christ, provides a classic illustration of this searching inquisitiveness among the prophets. John’s disciples already knew about Jesus’ ministry (cf. Matt. 9:14)

and had reported to him about it (Luke 7:18). Yet John wanted to know for sure if Jesus was the predicted Messiah: When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, *“Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”* (Matt. 11:1–3)

In response, Jesus gave His credentials—all of which fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (cf. Isa. 29:18–19; 35:5–10; 61:1) about Messiah: *“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them’”* (vv. 4–5).

John had earlier pointed to Jesus and prophesied, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Even though the Holy Spirit inspired him to declare that, he still pondered its meaning and wanted to ascertain if indeed Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 7:18–23). If the greatness of the salvation yet to come was the intense, preoccupying study of all the prophets, then it ought to be just as precious, if not more so, to those believers today who have the full revelation.

### Salvation of the Theme of the Spirit’s Inspiration

*“The Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you,”* (1:11b–12a) The prophecies the Holy Spirit revealed to the prophets were divinely inspired and recorded under His superintendence (cf. Jer. 1:9; 23:28; Ezek. 2:7; Amos 3:7–8). And the overall theme of those prophecies was twofold: the **sufferings of Christ** and the **glories to follow**.

The Old Testament refers to the sufferings of Christ in such as the resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Christ, appear in passages like Isaiah 9:6–7; Daniel 2:44; 7:13–14; and Zechariah 2:10–13; 14:16–17. That Peter used the phrase Spirit of Christ within them (cf. Rom. 8:9) demonstrates that the eternal Christ, inseparable from the Holy Spirit, worked from within the Old Testament writers to record God’s infallible revelation. Hence the apostle wrote in his second letter that “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). The Spirit was indicating (edēlou, “making plain”) to them as

He predicted (promarturomenon, “witnessed beforehand”) what was coming. He was plainly testifying to the prophets about God’s salvation that would be fully accomplished through Jesus Christ (cf. the KJV and NKJV rendering, “testified beforehand”).

The Spirit also made it clear that the prophets’ searching would never be fully satisfied because the complete gospel message could not be revealed during that time. Peter indicated this reality when he wrote: it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves. In the Pentateuch, Moses prophesies about the coming Prophet, who actually was the Messiah: “*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him*” (Deut. 18:15; cf. Num. 24:17). Moses and the other prophets were looking ahead to the culmination of Christ’s saving work in a future segment of redemptive history (cf. Heb. 1:1–2). The writer of Hebrews provides additional insight, “*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance*” (Heb. 11:13; cf. vv. 39–40).

Still the prophecies had immense value (cf. Luke 1:70; Acts 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:20; 2 Peter 1:19), though their fulfillment was not for the Old Testament prophets to witness. They instead looked ahead to a time when Messiah’s saving work would embrace believers from all nations in new covenant blessings (Pss. 22:27–28; 72:8–17; cf. Isa. 42:6; 60:1–3; 62:1–3, 11–12; 66:12–13). They lived in hope, just as Christians do who anticipate their Lord’s Second Coming. Old Testament saints were saved by faith in God based on the fact that Messiah Jesus would in the future bear the full judgment of God for their sins (Isa. 53:4–6). God was always applying the new covenant, always by grace offering forgiveness of sins to those who repented and believed, although the new covenant was not ratified until the cross. Old Testament believers were saved by a future grace, New Testament ones by a past grace—the Cross is the pinnacle of redemption.

### Salvation was the Theme of the Apostles’ Preaching

*In these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven*” (1:12b). The Holy Spirit inspired not only the Old Testament prophets, but also the New Testament apostles, who took the fully revealed gospel as the theme of their preaching. **These things** again

refers to the salvation grace that was to come, specifically to the person of Christ and the present proclamation of the gospel. Years earlier Peter announced these truths in the first recorded apostolic sermon, delivered on Pentecost, *“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself”* (Acts 2:38–39; cf. 2 Cor. 6:2). In addition to Peter, those who preached the gospel included the remainder of the Twelve, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Philip, James the half-brother of Jesus, Jude the half-brother of Jesus, Stephen, and others unnamed. Not all were apostles of Christ in the same sense as Paul and the Twelve (they had not all seen the risen Lord), but they were sent by the church as messengers of the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Paul illustrates well the singular devotion such preachers had to the greatness of the salvation message. He wrote to the Corinthian believers, And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:1–5; cf. Rom. 1:16–17)

### Salvation is the Theme of the Angels’ Examination

*“Things into which angels long to look”* (1:12c). Believers wonder what the angels know and experience in the spiritual and invisible realm. Christians desire to have eternal holiness and experience glory and fellowship with the Trinity as the elect angels do. But conversely the angels wonder what it is like to experience the grace and glory of salvation and God’s forgiveness from sin. In fact, Peter says, they are continually looking with fascination into salvation’s greatness.

**Things** denotes the many features of salvation **into which angels long to look**. **Long** translates epithumousin, which describes having a strong desire or overpowering impulse that is not easily satisfied. The term indicates that the angels’ interest in salvation is not merely whimsical or an incidental curiosity but a strong passion with

them. **Look** (parakupsai) literally means to stretch one's head forward or to bend down.

The angels, as it were, want to get down close and look deeply into the matters related to salvation. They have a holy curiosity to understand the kind of grace they will never experience. The holy angels do not need to be saved, and the fallen angels cannot be saved. But the holy ones seek to understand salvation so that they might glorify God more fully, which is their primary reason for existence (Job 38:7; Ps. 148:2; Isa. 6:3; Luke 2:13–14; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:11–12; 7:11–12; cf. Neh. 9:6; Phil. 2:9–11). It is not that the angels have been uninvolved in God's plan of salvation. They announced Christ's birth (Luke 1:26–35; 2:10–14), ministered to Him during His times of testing (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43), stood by the grave when He arose from the dead (Matt. 28:5–7; Mark 16:4–7; Luke 24:4–7), attended His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:10–11), and now serve Him by ministering to all believers (3:22; Heb. 1:14).

God has made His angels witnesses to what occurs in the body of Christ. They rejoice and praise God whenever He saves a sinner (Luke 15:7, 10). They were watching the apostle Paul and the other apostles (1 Cor. 4:9). God continues to put His saving grace on display before the angels *“that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places”* (Eph. 3:10). Though the angels will never experience redemption, the book of Revelation contains a fascinating portrayal of their interest in it: They have been witnesses to the greatness of God's salvation, and they long to look further into it so they might praise and glorify Him more. No matter how difficult life's trials are, Christians can face them triumphantly because of the greatness of God's grace in giving them a salvation the prophets studied, the Holy Spirit inspired, the apostles preached, and the angels continue to investigate.

There is hardly another word as blessed, hopeful, comforting, or assuring as salvation. The message of the Bible is that even though man cannot save himself from the eternal, damning consequences of his sin (Gen. 2:17; Jer. 2:22; 18:12; John 3:19; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1–3; Col. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:25–26), God can and will rescue from condemnation all those who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, and believe in His Word (Matt. 11:28–30; Luke 19:10; John 1:12–13, 29; 3:14–17; Acts 10:43; Eph. 1:7; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 7:25; James 1:18). Peter noted the joy of the church in the glorious

gift of salvation, no matter how adverse their circumstances, Christians should never stop rejoicing over the greatness of their salvation: “Sing to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day” (Ps. 96:2; cf. Pss. 9:14; 21:1; 40:16; 71:23; 1 Chron. 16:23; Isa. 25:9; 35:10; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Thess. 5:16; Rev. 5:9).

In 1 Timothy 3:16, we read the following to see further the wonder and awe and amazement of how Jesus is Lord from beginning to end:

“...great is the mystery of godliness:

He who was revealed in the flesh,

Was vindicated in the Spirit,

Seen by angels;

Proclaimed among the nations,

Believed on in the world,

Taken up in glory.”

## “This Salvation...”

### Ephesians 3:14-21

As we have considered the prophets, their prophecies, and the wonder of His great mystery, let's turn for a time to look at this salvation that's been given to us. In Paul is earnest before the Father on his knees praying for the Christians then and now for us. For from every era of history, the believers (those now in heaven) and those who are alive on earth today are family.

Paul's prayer is for the strengthening of our inner being by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a mark of every Christian to submit to God's Word and Spirit. It is not reserved for some special part of the Christian family, but is for all those who discipline their minds and spirits to study the Word, understand it and live by it. It is precious to know that although the physical person becomes weaker with age, the inner spiritual person should grow stronger through the Holy Spirit. He is the one who will energize, revitalize and empower the obedient, committed Christian.

As a result, Christ dwells in our hearts through faith for the purpose of being grounded and rooted in love (Eph. 3:17). Every believer is indwelt by Christ at the moment of salvation, but He is at home finding consistency and satisfaction only where



hearts are cleansed of sin and filled with His Spirit. We need to continue to trust in Christ to exercise His Lordship over us. Then we are rooted and grounded in His love. This establishes a strong foundation of self-giving, self-loving for God and his people. (1 John 4:9-14).

Also in the prayer, may we be given a greater understanding of the dimensions of the love of Christ which goes beyond all that we can ever know. Our ability to understand this love is only possible from the Spirit-powered love in our own lives. This love is far beyond the capability of human reason and experience, but Paul is praying for us to come as near as possible to our Christ, our Father and the Spirit in our lives. When we do this, God's power working in and through believers is unlimited and will be far beyond what we can comprehend. When we as His children live and grow in our faithfulness, we give glory and honor to our Christ which He deserves from His church.

Colossians 1:26-29

Paul writes of the mystery which was hidden from past ages and generations. This truth which was hidden has now been revealed to His saints. The Old Testament predicted the coming of our Messiah and that we as Gentiles would be able to become a part of this salvation, but it did not tell of how we would possess the surpassing riches of the indwelling Christ. This is the glorious revealed mystery of *Christ in us*.

(Taken from Romans 8:9-11) We are not to live in the flesh, but in the Spirit who makes His home in every person who trusts in Jesus Christ. If there is no evidence of Christ's presence in us, then He does not belong to us. Even though our earthly body is dead because of sin, yet we are alive in spirit because of *Christ in us*.

The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the guarantee to each believer of future glory with Him. We are to proclaim Him then to every man speaking His truth and wisdom so they may be complete *in Christ*.

## 2 Peter 1:2-11

*"To all those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours."* Peter is emphasizing here that all Christians have received the same priceless saving faith.

There are no first and second class Christians in spiritual, racial, or gender distinctions (Gal. 3:28). This faith is not by our own will to receive, but came purely from God's grace. We receive a faith and belief that is personal to each one of us which expresses our human side of salvation. God still must grant that faith when the Holy Spirit awakens the dead soul in response to hear the Word of God. (*So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.*) Rom. 10:7.

We share this equal gift of salvation, because God's righteousness is imputed to us. That righteousness recognizes no distinction between people, so not only do they have faith because God gives it to them, they are saved only because God imputes (attributes) righteousness to them. (*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*) 2 Cor. 5:21.

*"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"* (verse 2). Our faith is built on knowing the truth of our God and Savior. The "knowledge" here implies a larger, more thorough and intimate knowledge. Our Christian faith is built on knowing the truth about God. We do not have a mystical religion, but one that is based in objective historical, revealed, rational truth from God and intended to be understood and believed. The deeper and wider that knowledge of the Lord, the more "grace and peace" are multiplied.

We are eternally secure in our salvation and will persevere and grow because we have received everything necessary to sustain eternal life through Christ's power. To be godly is to live reverently, loyally, and obediently toward God. Peter means that the genuine believer ought not to ask God for something more to become godly, because he has already has every spiritual resource to manifest, sustain, and perfect godly living.

The knowledge of Christ emphasized here is not a superficial knowledge, or a mere surface awareness of the facts about Christ, but a genuine, personal sharing of life with Christ, based on repentance from sin and personal faith in Him. The call to *"His own glory and excellence"* is the effectual call to salvation. This saving call is based on the sinner's understanding of Christ's revealed majesty and moral excellence evidencing that He is Lord and Savior. This implies that there must be a clear presentation of Christ's person and work as the God-Man in evangelism, which attracts

men to salvation. The cross and resurrection most clearly reveal His “glory and excellence.”

*“By this knowledge of Christ, He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises”* (promises of abundant and eternal life). These precious promises of salvation result in becoming God’s children in the present age and thereby sharing in God’s nature by the possession of His eternal life. Christians do not become little gods, but they are “new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) and have the Holy Spirit living in them (1 Cor. 6:19-0). Believers will also partake of the divine nature in a greater way when they bear a glorified body like Jesus Christ.

## Living Before God our Father

*“Therefore prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:13). As some translations depict this verse as “Gird up the loins of your mind,” as if in the ancient practice of gathering up ones robes when needing to be in a hurry. Here it is used to apply to one’s thought process. The meaning is to pull in all the loose ends of one’s thinking, by rejecting the hindrances of the world and focusing on the future grace of God.

Matthew Henry’s commentary states:

You have a journey to go, a race to run, a warfare to accomplish, and a great work to do; as the traveler, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer, gather in, and gird up, your long and loose garments, that you may be more ready prompt, going about in our business of life in Christ. Gather them in, do not let them hang loose and neglected about you; restrain their extravagances, and let the loins or strength and vigor of your minds be exerted in your duty; disengage yourselves from all that would hinder you, and go on resolutely in your obedience. Be sober, be vigilant against all your spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate and modest in eating, drinking, apparel, recreation, business, and in the whole of your behavior. Be sober-minded also in opinion, as well as in practice, and

humble in your judgment of yourselves. And hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

A Christian's work is not over as soon as he has got into a state of grace; he must still hope and strive for more grace. When he has entered the strait gate, he must still walk in the narrow way, and gird up the loins of his mind for that purpose. A strong and perfect trust in God's grace is very consistent with our best endeavors in our duty; we must hope perfectly, and yet gird up our loins, and address ourselves vigorously to the work we have to do, encouraging ourselves from the grace of Jesus Christ.

We are reminded to - *keep sober*...Spiritual sober-mindedness includes the ideas of steadfastness, self-control, clarity of mind, and moral decisiveness. The sober Christian is correctly in charge of his priorities and not intoxicated with the various allurements of the world. *Fix your hope completely*...In light of their great salvation, Christians, especially those undergoing suffering, should unreservedly live for the future, anticipating the consummation of their salvation at the second coming of Christ. *Grace to be brought to you*...Christ's future ministry of glorifying Christians and given them eternal life in His presence will be the final culmination of the grace initiated at salvation.

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