

Now the apostle Peter is telling us here that the salvation we have in Jesus is something so wonderful and great, and that we should appreciate it so much that it should have a tremendous effect upon our lives. We should not be like **Christian in Giant Despair's castle** in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. You'll remember **that all the while he was in the dungeon there he had a key** that would have gotten him out. He and Hopeful had endured beatings, much torture and hardship all because Christian didn't appreciate the key that he had. And of course the key was the promises of the gospel.

So the main thing that I want you to see is the great salvation that you have in Jesus.

What we have in Christ is **so wonderful, so glorious, so magnificent that the thought of it ought to help us to overcome all griefs, trials and obstacles.** That's one of Peter's aims here—to get us to appreciate how amazing our salvation is—so that we will be strong in the faith. His aim is to get us to be like the apostles in **Acts 5:41f**, where we read that,

“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.”

They had been flogged, but they rejoiced because they had a proper estimation of the salvation they had in Jesus Christ.

And one of the things that the Holy Spirit wants Christians to do is to appreciate how marvelous their salvation is. He wants them to know that there is nothing like it. As Jesus said in **Matthew 13:44f**,

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

He told us how the salvation we have exceeds any other kind of riches. The salvation you have is no ordinary salvation. Indeed, in **Ephesians 1:18f** the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians that,

“the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe.”

Now to help us realize how great our salvation is Peter draws our attention to **three things**: to it's effect on the Old Testament prophets, it's affect on the apostles, and it's effect on the angels. Today we're going to look at the first effect—to how the Old Testament prophets viewed our salvation.

First thing he tells you to show you how wonderful our salvation is that **the Old Testament prophets were thrilled by it, so thrilled that they had an great desire to know more about it.**

The prophets of old eagerly anticipated the great salvation which the New Testament Christians were experiencing. Peter tells us that they,

“searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”

The Old Testament prophets were not as privileged as we are. They were only given little glimpses into the glorious things that would take place when the Messiah came. **The Old Testament prophets were not passive robots** who said, “Thus says the Lord...” No, quite the contrary, **they were living, feeling, questioning human beings**. They were individuals who were deeply interested in and greatly moved by the messages they received. They had questions about what they prophesied and a longing to find out more.

So what did they do? We read that they searched intently. Peter uses two verbs to describe what they did. Literally, it would be **“seek out and search did the prophets”**. (Young's literal translation) By using two verbs Peter meant to emphasize to us their longing and the effort that they expended on the search. Some have

suggested that Peter is getting at two things here. First, that they gave considerable thought and meditation to these things. Secondly, they made a careful investigation of the sources that might provide an answer.

These things that they were predicting were so wonderful, so remarkable—that they couldn't just leave them.

These things were so great that they wanted to know when they would happen.

Verse 11 tells us that they spend their effort,

“trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”

They wanted to know two things. They wanted to know the time. But they also wanted to know more about the **circumstances** of such things. These things blew their minds. They were astounded. They wanted to know more and they wanted to know when.

But of course, their expectation was not fulfilled.

Verse 12 tells this. It says,

“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you...”

As Calvin says, “There was a difference between the Law and the Gospel, as if there were a **veil** between them, so that they might not see more closely the things that are not revealed to our eyes.”

As Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 13:16,

“Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

Many prophets and righteous men longed to see and hear what the disciples heard—but they did not hear it. They were told that the fulfillment of these things would not be in their day.

The prophets only knew a small portion of what we know about Christ and the salvation we have in Him. There are things about Jesus in the Old Testament, that is very clear.

The Old Testament contains many prophecies and descriptions of Christ. **But the point is that it was never enough.** The prophets longed for more. The little that

they had, all it did was whet their appetite. They wanted more, that's why they searched intently, trying to find out more about the time and circumstances of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow.

Now I'm going to say something now that I feel compelled to say it because it's an important point from God's Word and it relates to how we view the Old Testament and how we view the books of the Old Testament.

What they had was **adequate** for them, for their place in history, but it's wasn't enough. As far as revelation was concerned, they had but a limited experience of the grace brought by Christ. Calvin says that they had but '**a faint image**' of Him. They desired to know more.

The prophets wanted to know more. And we in fact do know much more, and this newer, fuller, more glorious revelation should be fully incorporated into our church life. The prophets wanted to know more. What they knew only whetted their appetites. They were thrilled and intrigued. The salvation that they foresaw was so great, so wonderful, so amazing—that they sought to know more.

The second thing that I want you to see they were thrilled because of the way that salvation was going to be carried out.

Verse 10 tells us that they,

"spoke of the grace that was to come to you..."

In particular two things are mentioned—the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow.

Some of the Old Testament prophets knew about the sufferings of the coming Christ. And it was something that absolutely amazed them.

Now what we must appreciate here is that their perspective was much different from ours. Perhaps because we are so familiar with the sufferings of Christ that we don't realize how shocking it really was.

For **much of the Old Testament emphasis** on the coming Messiah was on His **glory**. We see this back in **Genesis 49:10** in Jacob's blessings on his sons. About

Judah he said,

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”

Or think about **Psalm 24** where our Shepherd is described as the “**King of Glory**”. Or think of **Isaiah 9:6** where we are told that

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.”

Or think of **Isaiah 11** where we are told about the root from the branch of Jesse. We are told that,

“but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

Now there is much in the Old Testament about Christ’s sufferings too. Perhaps the two greatest examples are **Psalm 22** and **Isaiah 53**.

But these prophecies were so shocking that many of the Jewish people refused to accept it.

We see this attitude in Peter in **Matthew 16:21**. Jesus began to tell his disciples about how He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. You’ll remember Peter’s reaction. He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. He said,

“Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!”

The idea that the Messiah should suffer was so shocking that many of the Jewish people just couldn’t comprehend it, they put it aside and focused on the glories.

But those prophets who wrote about the sufferings of Christ and who understood what was going to happen—they were astounded by it. It was almost unbelievable to them.

The longed to know more about these things. The things that were revealed to them created a great longing in them, a longing for more.

Now what does this mean for you?

The first thing I would suggest is that how much we should be studying the Scriptures to learn more about Jesus and His great love for us.

We have what the prophets lacked. They would have been overjoyed to have the New Testament.

Yet, we have it, and how much do we use it? How much do we let it thrill our hearts? In God's Word we have things that are so much more valuable than silver or gold—and yet we neglect them.

How much we should value the Word. How much you should appreciate it.

How much we should think about it. We don't know enough about these things. We need to know more about them. We should be appreciating it so much- it is so great. If we knew more about them, we would be able to live lives of greater faith.

Exceedingly great and precious promises. 2 Peter 1:4,

“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises...”

How much we should be thinking, meditating, reading about the work of Christ on our behalf. How great is the salvation we have!

The second application I would make is that

you should be able to rise above troubles and trials.

Calvin: “There is no reason why afflictions should unreasonably depress us, as though we are miserable under them, since the Spirit of God declares us blessed.”

Calvin, “All these things show us one thing, that Christians, elevated to the height of happiness, ought to surmount all the obstacles of the world. What is there that this incomparable benefit does not reduce to nothing?”

There is nothing greater than what we have in the gospel. No greater story was ever told—and it's all true. How can you ignore it, how can you let it pass you by?

To the prophets—Moses, David, Isaiah—these things were greater than anything in life.

And you're treating them with contempt. It should not be. Hebrews 2:3,

“how shall we escape if we ignore such a **great salvation**? “

What the Old Testament prophets are really telling us is the whole purpose for human history and it is rooted in the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

That is the meaning of history! Indeed, in the similar statement in 4:13, Peter makes the history of Christ the pattern for the history of every Christian: "rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." This is the scheme of history, this is where it is going, where everything is headed -- the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ, and what makes that so infinitely significant is the fact that Christ already visited this world once before and when he was here, the Son of God suffered for the sins of the world. Nothing compares to this. Not the present that more and more overwhelms us every day of our lives, not the vast changes that are shifting the ground under the feet of people today, not the developments in technology, not the comings and goings, risings and fallings of celebrities that we hear about every day or the fortunes of our sports heroes or the performance of the stock market or our own individual company. All of that comes and goes and, in very truth, doesn't matter a tinker's dam in the larger scheme of things.

Not even the rise and fall of nations. The Soviet Union has come and gone. Empires have risen and fallen before and they will rise and fall again, and the meaning of human history will be the same after as it was before. History will still be making its inexorable march to one endpoint, an endpoint which is what it has always been,.

Peter says, the true significance of the history of the world is salvation, the individual's forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and hope of everlasting life.

The reason there is such a thing as a human being, made in the image of God, is because there is such a thing as salvation and eternal life. The fact that there is and that there is, conversely, the possibility of missing this salvation and falling under divine judgment instead, is the whole significance of existence, of the life of the world, of the march of human events (as Peter will say explicitly in 2 Peter 3), and of the life of every individual human being.

What else did Jesus mean when he said, "For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37) Our culture no longer really pays any attention to the reality which that statement alone is meaningful: the fundamentally moral nature of human life, lived as it is in the presence and before the view of a Holy God who is our Maker, the reality of man in actual relationship with this God, of a coming judgment, of eternity in heaven or hell, bliss or damnation. It no longer sees human beings as set apart by the supernatural element within them, the eternal soul, that every human being has whatever his or her condition of life.