

IX. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“Praising God for the Blessing of Our Salvation Truth”
I Peter 1:3–12
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
November 12, 2017 • Morning Sermon

This is the last study on Peter’s doxology in I Peter 1:3–12. Our focus will be on I Peter 1:10–12, the third stanza but I will open our study by reading the first stanza. I Peter 1:3–5 says *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Imagine with me that God has called you to a very specific task. Here’s the task. He has called you to equip, empower, exhort and encourage relatively new believers concerning their new life in Christ and for Christ. Inevitably they are going to face adversity/suffering that may even cost them their life as they are faithful for Christ so He also want you to encourage and equip them for what they need as they may likely die for Christ. They are to live by faith in Christ and to die in faith as they likely will do that for Christ. So if that was your task what would you do? How would you fulfill that task? It may not be too far-fetched for you to consider it because of the particular trajectory we see within our culture.

Parents, are not introducing your children to life in Christ and for Christ and to be faithful no matter what even if you are targeted or persecuted in life or even just livelihood? Maybe you are a discipler and you have a small group of new Christians preparing them for their new life in Christ especially in a culture that is increasingly targets with hostility Christianity in general and Christ in particular. So what would you do?

There are two men who had such a task, but they aren’t the only two men. Their names were Peter and Paul and both tackled the task the same way. They encouraged and equipped believers. They both wrote letters to churches in the same region. Paul’s letter was Ephesians and Peter’s was I Peter. In these letters they both started with worship and a doxology. In fact, the similarity even goes greater. The doxology was multiple verses in the Bible but yet only one sentence in length. Paul’s doxology is Ephesians 1:3–14 and his one sentence is 228 words in three stanzas giving praise to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Peter’s doxology is one sentence with 177 words and three stanzas. We have looked closely at two of his stanzas and in this study we look at the final one. One might be thinking perhaps why is Peter’s doxology not as long as Paul’s? Personally, I think it’s the difference between being a fisherman and a lawyer. Peter’s doxology clearly has a focus to it like Paul’s.

So if I was getting someone ready to live for Christ and likely die for Christ, I would pull out best practices. I would tell them there will be some difficult suffering, hug them up and tell them to dig down deep and say ‘you can get through this.’ Peter, maybe even more than Paul, knows that what they are going to face in living for Christ, is that the answer is not found in themselves but it’s outside of themselves for it is found only in God. To live a big life under

challenge, you have to have a big salvation, a big Savior and a big God. The answer is to look outside and up, not inside.

So they take the time to give you this glorious statement of our great salvation, our great Savior and they put weight in the ballast. When adversity strikes like there has to be weight in the ballast. There has to be something that holds in the moment. There has to be something that stabilizes in the challenge. There has to be sound doctrine. You can't have a sound life without sound doctrine. You can have sound doctrine without a sound life. My guess is that there is not a theological question that I can stump Satan with. He could probably repeat orthodox theology backwards and forwards. You can have sound doctrine and not have a sound life but you can't have a sound life without sound doctrine.

So Peter and Paul give us theological weight in the context of a doxology and worship. Our life for Christ flows from and to worship, thus a doxology. Our life is not only born out and matured in the context of worship but it is worship that has weightiness to it, the weightiness of who God is, what He has done and there is where the weight in my soul stabilizes me for life, no matter what the adversity. The adversity could be the targeting of livelihood or the targeting of my life but if there is weight in my soul, then I can stand in Christ as more than a conqueror, as sheep to be slaughtered. This is not because I'm digging deep within me, but because I have a great God that is digging deep within me and He fills me with a glorious salvation secured by a great and glorious Savior. What a Savior!

We have covered the first two stanzas and the first stanza is praising God for the blessing of our salvation inheritance. I know most of you in life will probably get some kind of an inheritance. Every single inheritance in this world, no matter how big it is or who gives it or who gets it, they are all going to fade, corrupt and perish. Peter says we have an inheritance that is undefiled, imperishable and incorruptible. You have an inheritance in heaven that is being kept for you and you are being kept for it.

So here is how it is summed up for you. The security of the heirs of God's salvation does not depend upon the strength and power of our faith but upon the strength and power of God revealed through our faith. Our faith reveals the God whom we trust. The strength we rely on is not ours and it's not even our faith. This has nothing to do with whether we need to believe a little stronger or not. God is actually bringing some of these issues to strengthen my faith and I do not put my confidence in me nor my faith but I put my confidence in the Lord who gives me the faith and strengthens my faith. And it is keeping me by His strength for the inheritance He is keeping for me. This leads us to stanza two.

Here is stanza two in I Peter 1:6–9 which says [6] *In this (the inheritance kept for you) you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, [9] obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

The second stanza is praising God for the blessing of our salvation trials. It is summed up this way. The life of a Christian in this age is continually marked by the seemingly incompatible yet beneficially concurrent dynamics of grievous trials informed by escalating joy. In other words, we would think you don't have joy unless you have the absence of trials or if you have trials you can't have joy but that's not what is in the lives of God's people. These trials though they can be grievous, multi-faceted (financial, social, emotional, physical, relational,

spiritual etc.) and multiple they are only on this side of eternity but God uses them for a purpose. The Bible says in Romans 5:3–5, [3] *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

God is sovereignly working in my life through the various trials I am going through for through them He shows me what I know, what I don't know and what I need to know. Through these trials He shows me what He is doing in my life so I have escalating joy. The trials don't manifest that God has abandoned me but the trials are the instruments God is using to develop me. My trials are informed by the escalating joy that God has given me a platform to exalt Him as these trials are doing something in my life and these trials are necessary as He does His work within me. Those two stanzas lead us to a third stanza.

The third stanza is I Peter 1:10–12 which says [10] *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. [12] 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, things into which angels long to look.* This third stanza is praising God for the blessing of our salvation truth. This salvation truth came from the Prophets, Apostles and the angels look upon it as they long to understand it. So let's look a little closer at these three things.

What are Prophets? Prophets are those God called, God designed, God empowered, God directed, God defined instruments through which He gives us the Old Testament that lays the ground work for the New Testament and its fulfillment. When Jesus met up with the two men on the road to Emmaus it says in Luke 24:27, [27] *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* The first Prophet is Moses and then there are all the Prophets from Moses to Malachi. Here is this unfolding of over a thousand years of Prophets that God spoke to and through for they were His mouthpieces to declare His Word and to give us the Word which is foundational to the coming of Christ which then is explained by the New Testament writers who are the Apostles.

What did those Prophets do? They did a number of things that are not identified in this I Peter 1 text but here it does tell us they did five things. The first thing they did was they prophesied. They spoke forth God's Word and that's why when you read the Bible it doesn't say something like 'Thus says Jeremiah...' but Jeremiah says 'Thus says the Lord...' This is the Word of the Lord that came to the servant of the Lord and through the servant of the Lord comes to us.

Secondly, the Prophets prophesied something very specific, the Gospel of salvation by grace through a Messiah. So as you go through the Old Testament there is this progressing and unfolding of this understanding of the Gospel of saving grace in Christ, by narrative, event, prophecy, sign, type, shadow and precept. It is the premiere and primary message of the Old Testament going to the New. This Gospel message is saying that we are sinners and we need a Savior. We are under God's judgment and we can't save ourselves. Neither religion nor ritual can save us. The Old Testament is saying that God has Good News for God is going to send His Son. His Son is the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Prophet, the Priest and the King.

This Son is going to put Himself in your place. He will suffer and die on a cross and by His blood you will be redeemed. With His righteousness you will be accepted. He will be raised

and ascend in triumph to glory. He will establish His Kingdom not only through the nation He chose to come through, Israel, but to all the nations of the world as we make disciples of all the nations in this world. This Messiah will lay aside glory to come to suffer for our sake. Then He will be taken up in glory. This is the message that beats throughout the 39 books of the Old Testament. That message comes with great power to us progressively throughout the Scriptures.

Thirdly, they carefully searched and inquired. I Peter 1:10–11 says [10] *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours **searched and inquired carefully**, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.* They knew the bad news was that we were sinners and we can't save ourselves. The Good News is that God will send His Son to die for our sins to save us and establish His Kingdom but these Prophets who are inspired are not omniscient. They don't know everything. So they began to carefully search and inquire about two things – who He is and when He would come. They were inspired and had been given the Gospel, the message of saving grace.

This is why Paul said this to Timothy in II Timothy 3:14–15, [14] *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* But who would be the Christ and when would He come? This is the very thing these Prophets were inquiring about.

The fourth thing is that they were led and empowered by the Spirit of Christ. Here there is a very specific title given to the Holy Spirit and it only happens two times in the Bible. This title is given in Romans 8:9 and right here in I Peter 1:11. Here they specifically say this Spirit is in them and through the Holy Spirit they have been carried along to give the Gospel. They inquire specifically from this Spirit who the Christ is and when He will come and the title given for the Spirit here is the Spirit of Christ. This is telling us that these Prophets were guided by the same Holy Spirit who was present in the conception of Jesus in the womb, who raised up Jesus in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man in His childhood, who came upon Him in His ordination as Prophet, Priest and King when He was baptized, who was with Him in the wilderness when Satan had to flee from Him, who accompanied Him into Galilee when He taught, who led Him up to the cross, who brought Him forth from the grave, who was in the clouds as He was raised to the throne of grace, and the same One who that Jesus now pours out in you. It is that Spirit who was with the Prophets as they spoke of the Gospel and then as they inquired.

Fifthly, the Prophets were told not to serve themselves but those who are to believe in this Christ when He comes. I Peter 1:12a says [12a] *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...* The 'you' here is those who believe in Jesus. Those Old Testament Prophets had been called, directed and informed in order that they might serve those who believe laying the foundation of Gospel truth in the Old Testament that would lead to the fulfillment in the New Testament.

So who are the ones who announced those things to you that you long to understand? It is the New Testament Apostles. With the Old Testament Prophets we find out what God is going to do and they long to know who will carry out God's plan and when but it was not for them to know. Then He comes and breathes on the Apostles the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost He pours forth the Spirit so the New Testament Apostles now proclaim not only the Gospel revealed in the Old Testament but the answer to the who and when. Who? He is Jesus, the Name above all

Names and at which every knee shall bow. The Apostles proclaim the prophecies and promises as ‘yes’ and ‘amen’ in Jesus. They also answer the question when and it is at the right time that Christ died for the ungodly. At the right time Christ saved us at the cross. The New Testament Apostles empowered by the Holy Spirit announce the Gospel as they answer who, Jesus and when, at the cross Jesus did His redeeming work in our life through His shed blood.

The Prophets are very much like a man you find in the book of Acts and he is known as the Ethiopian Eunuch. The Ethiopian Eunuch had been to Jerusalem and was on his way back to Ethiopia through the wilderness area. Philip, who is representing the Apostles, is brought out to him. As the Eunuch was traveling in his chariot he was reading from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 53 although back then the books of the Bible had not yet been divided up into chapters. It is the clearest declaration of what all the Prophets were saying concerning the Gospel of saving grace through the Messiah. Here is the account in Acts 8.

Acts 8:29–35 says [29] *And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”* [30] *So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”* [31] *And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?”* *And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.* [32] *Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. [33] In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”*

[34] *And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”* [35] *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*

Philip shared Jesus with him. Here is the Gospel that is Jesus. For those of you reading this who are searching there is no one else I have to give to you. The answer is not in me or this church or in baptism or in you. I am pointing you outside of yourself and myself, for I’m pointing you to Him. The Gospel is the Gospel because of Jesus. When? At the right time He saves His people from their sins. I have no one else to preach to you but Jesus. The most important decision in your life is what you will do with Jesus. What will you do with Jesus?

Thirdly, we not only have the Old Testament Prophets and the New Testament Apostles but there are the elect angels. I Peter 1:12b says [12b] *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, things into which angels **long** to look.* The word ‘long’ here ought to be translated ‘yearn.’ The elect angels long to know the things that you and I know, the things prophesied by the Prophets and the things announced by the New Testament Apostles. I love the way it says the angels long to look, gaze intently upon it.

When I was studying for this sermon it reminded me of a song from my teenage years with the lyrics that said ‘searching, searching, searching life away.’ The Prophets searched and the Apostles announced. Angels are searching longing to know the things we know. The angels know who the Messiah is. They know the time He came for some announced it. They also know the Gospel but they don’t know it like you know it. They don’t know what it means to be forgiven. They don’t know what it means to experience the relentless, redeeming love of God or for the God of glory to die for them. They don’t know what it means to be accepted in the righteousness of Christ. They long to know it but they will never know it yet you can always know it.

So this brings me to the takeaway from this third stanza in I Peter 1. The takeaway is simply that our salvation inheritance exceeds what the Old Testament Prophets knew (not what

they had), embraces what the New Testament Apostles proclaimed and beyond what the elect angels can ever understand. I am just a closet historian that has the privilege to be a theologian preacher. Historians are unstoppable, irrepressible romanticists. There is always a period in history that we would rather have been living than where we are right now. Now as a Christian I thank God for when I am living. Unlike the Prophets, I not only know the Gospel like they did but I know who and when. We have a salvation that we inherit and is kept for us as we are kept for it. We are resident aliens in this world serving Christ. What we know also dwarfs what the elect angels will ever know.

Will Peter get buffeted and battered in this world? Absolutely and he also faltered and failed. One that week leading up to Christ's death you would have not known the difference between Peter and Judas. Peter denied Him three times and walked away from Him. Do you want to know why Peter is writing this doxology and trying to give them sound doctrine? He wants them to see a big God, a big salvation from a big Book, because there is a big life that comes from all that and they are going to get challenged so he wants them to know the answer which is not in him or them. The one who said he would never leave or fail Christ, left Him and failed Him but then Christ came for Peter. Christ singly made sure Peter knew He was risen. Peter wants all to know he has a great God who is risen and he wants them to have a great God.

He knows that a person can have sound doctrine and not have a sound life but he also knows they can't have a sound life without sound doctrine. So they need to know how great their God is to know how great their salvation inheritance is. It is that God who will be with you when you are battered, buffeted, become fearful, shamed, challenged in any way, targeted in this world, persecuted and all of these things are inevitable. Christ tells us in John 15:20b, [20b] *If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* Philippians 1:29 says [29] *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.* Romans 8:36 says [36] *As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."* Inevitably, as a believer in this world, I will be battered and buffeted but I have a great Savior. Hallelujah what a Savior! He is a friend, not to sin, but to sinners.

Peter and Paul knew it, proclaimed it and they did so out of worship. So Mr. Prophet I want to thank you that the Gospel you revealed is gloriously proclaimed and that Gospel has saved me. Mr. Prophet I know something that you didn't know. I know who it was – Jesus, and I know when it was – at the right time. Mr. Apostle the One whom you believed and knew by sight, because of the Gospel you announced to me in the power of the Holy Spirit, I never have seen Him but I love Him and believe in Him. I have embraced what the Spirit of God has brought to me from you and has given me eyes to see and ears to hear. Mr. Elect Angel, I love it when I read the Scriptures and hear you from heaven singing as I hear the choirs of heaven. Oh I love you Mr. Angel. I know you were at Bethlehem as you announced the Gospel – hark the heavenly angels sing 'glory to the new born King!' I know you were at Calvary with the legions of angels pulling at the tether to bring judgment that sinful man would dare do that to the Son of God but the Savior said to the angels 'stay, it's the right time for I am saving My people from their sins.' I see the angels sitting in the tomb saying to those who came to the tomb saying 'why do you seek the living among the dead for He's not here, He has risen.'

Yet these angels with their choirs at Bethlehem, their passions at Calvary and their witness at the tomb can never know what I know. Hear them sing from heaven 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come' and I can joyfully join them in the

choirs as I delight to sing the same but the angels cannot join the choir of saved sinners on earth for they can't sing what we sing as we sing;

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost, but now am found

T'was blind but now I see.

I was battered and buffeted but I can sing what they can't sing. The angels know it factually but they don't know it where I know it.

Another song they cannot sing with us says;

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,

Let this blest assurance control,

That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,

And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—

My sin, not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! (It is Well With My Soul)

From the earth I join the chorus of sinners saved by grace and I can sing what the Elect Angels long to hear. Here on earth we all can sing that it is well with my soul! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Spirit of the living God come and speak to our hearts. It you are reading this today and the Spirit of God says to you 'Come' by the Spirit of God I have announced to you the Gospel where God has made a way and I have shared with you who He is. He is Jesus and He did it at the cross. He has ascended triumphantly and He is coming again but right now you can come to Him who has come to you by His Spirit. If you would like to pray with someone please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. Just come to Him! Dear Savior, fill the hearts of Your people so that in a world when battered and buffeted they can say 'it is well with my soul, I have a great Savior and a great salvation and I am His and He is mine, what a Savior!' I pray this Jesus in Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN OVERVIEW

STANZA ONE – (vv. 3–5)

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Inheritance

The security of the Heirs of God's salvation does not depend upon the strength and power of our faith but upon the strength and power of God revealed through our faith.

STANZA TWO – (vv. 6–9)

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Trials

The Life of a Christian in this age is continually marked by the seemingly incompatible yet beneficially concurrent dynamics of grievous trials informed by escalating joy.

A CLOSER VIEW OF STANZA THREE

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Truth

O.T. PROPHETS

1. Prophesied
2. Prophesied salvation inheritance by grace - Gospel
3. Carefully searched/inquired– Who? When?
4. Led and Empowered by the Spirit of Christ
5. Served not themselves, but us.

N.T. APOSTLES

Empowered by Holy Spirit – announced Gospel

ELECT ANGELS

Long to know the things prophesied and announced

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Our salvation inheritance exceeds what the O.T. Prophets knew, embraces what the N.T. Apostles proclaimed and beyond what the Elect Angels can ever understand.