

THE GRACE OF GOD AND OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

1 Peter 1:10-12

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:10-17.**Intro:** The truth of salvation has always called for the exercise of faith.

We see this in the Old Testament, but we also see it in the New Testament. And even down to the present day, salvation always calls for trusting God in special ways because events in our lives do not always work out as we expect them to.

We see right from the beginning of this first epistle of Peter that he was writing to “strangers scattered” throughout the Empire. This does not mean that Peter did not know them (although he was not necessarily acquainted with everyone who would receive this letter), but it meant that he was writing to believers in all of those areas which he mentioned who were realizing that Christians are likely to be treated as foreigners by the people of this world. They had been scattered from their homes because of their faith in Christ. And it would seem from verse 12 of chapter 2 that Peter was writing primarily to Jewish believers. They had been rejected and driven away by their fellow Jews, and now they were being subjected to a hate campaign by the Gentiles. So they were getting trouble from both Jewish and Gentile unbelievers. Life for the people to whom Peter was writing had, from a human point-of-view been worse for them since they had been saved that it had been before they were saved. And this often causes confusion in the minds of the people of God. Their experience seemed to be in conflict with the promises of God. And that often is the case. It must have looked to the people like God did not care for them, or that He was punishing them for sins that they were not aware of.

I call your attention again to what Peter said to them in chapter 4, verse 12 and 13, where he told them not to think it “strange” that they were going through fiery trials. This means that they were thinking that it was “strange.” And Peter meant by this word that they were not be shocked, nor surprised, nor astonished by what had happened to them. They were not to react as though what had happened to them had never happened to God’s people before. I think that most of us know the feeling that they had because we often go through trials which baffle us and test our faith. It is difficult for us to expect what Christians often go through.

This feeling was demonstrated over and over again by the children of Israel as God led them from Egypt to the land He had promised to give to His people, the land of Canaan. And you will remember how constantly the people rebelled against Moses and Aaron, but in reality against God,

because of the difficult situations they had to face.

This problem is behind all that the Apostle Peter wrote in this epistle. And so we find that Peter began by restating some of the great truths of the Gospel (as he did in verses 1 through 5, and then by saying what he said about trials and testings in verses 6 through 9.

This brings us to our text for today: 1 Peter 1:10-12. Here we find him referring to:

I. THE DILEMMA OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS (1 Pet. 1:10-11).

This reference to the Old Testament prophets would also be an indication that Peter was writing to Jewish believers. The message of the prophets carried a great deal of weight with Jewish believers. And so Peter was seeking to show that the salvation which he preached, and which he mentioned in verses 5 and 9, and here in verse 10, was the same salvation that the prophets preached in Old Testament times. Peter said here that they prophesied “of that grace that should come unto you.”

Now by the word “grace” he was referring to the grace of God in salvation. And he did not mean that it only applied to this latter generation, but that the full doctrine of salvation would only be apparent after the Messiah had come. They spoke prophetically of this salvation, relating it to the Messiah, or Christ, and then they preached what God had made known to them, and which the writing prophets were led by God to record for their own generation, and for following generations. Let me repeat what I have said before about the prophets: they were foretellers, but they were also forthtellers. They were enabled to foretell coming events, but they were primarily forthtellers, preachers, of that which had been revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

Now these verse are very interesting from more than one standpoint.

In the first place, Peter was indicating here that because the message of salvation had come through the prophets, this was an indication that the message of God’s grace had not originated with them, but that it had been revealed to them by God. The theme of the prophets was, “Thus saith the Lord.” Moses was one of the greatest of the prophets, and he repeated these words over and over again. And the prophets were told to say this: “Thus saith the Lord.” The Lord wanted the people to know that the message was from Him! In fact, most of you will remember that the Holy Spirit led Peter, in writing his second epistle, to give us one of the grand-

est and clearest statements of how we got the Bible. You will find his words, given by the Holy Spirit, in 2 Peter 1:20-21. (Turn to it and read.)

The idea in these verses is that OT prophecy did not originate with man. It is not the product of man's will, or man's wisdom. But "men of God," men especially chosen by God, spoke in their writings, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul has given us another great statement about the divine origin of Scripture when he wrote in 2 Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." It means that Scripture is *God-breathed*. It is God's Word. It was written by Paul or Peter, or by Isaiah or Jeremiah, but they were so directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit in their writings, that what they have given us is the very Word of God.

Therefore, when Peter in our text for today, referred to the prophets of the OT, he was not only saying that his message, *i.e.*, Peter's message was not only the message of the OT prophets, but that the message had come to the prophets and apostles alike from God. They were not different messages, but the same message, and they had come from God.

But there was another point that the Apostle Peter was making.

Peter spoke of the way the prophets studied their own writings. This is further proof that prophets preached and wrote the message which God had given to them.

When I have read some books I have wondered if the authors knew what they were writing about, but that was really the case with the OT prophets. And notice that their big question was, "When?" They did not doubt but that what God had revealed them was true, but the divine time schedule was what concerned them. I doubt if Abraham realized that what God had revealed to him about salvation, would not be fulfilled for approximately two thousand years. I doubt if David realized that what God had revealed to Him about the coming Messiah, would not be fulfilled for a thousand years. And I doubt if Isaiah and Micah realized that the coming of the Messiah was still seven hundred years away from the time in which they wrote. They did not doubt the Word that God gave them, but the part that was lacking was the question as to *when* their prophecies of the coming Messiah and Redeemer would be fulfilled!

So what did they do? Our text says that they "enquired and searched diligently ... searching ..."

Matthew Henry gives a vivid description of the words which the Apostle Peter used here. This is his comment:

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 proportionably 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. Daniel was a man greatly beloved and inspired, yet he understood by books and study the computations of time, (Dan. 9:2). Even their own revelation required their study, meditation, and prayer.

What a description these words give us of the way the prophets searched out the meaning of that which the Lord had revealed through them. For how many of us can our study of the Word of God be likened to the hard work that a miner does in searching for ore of any kind, breaking not only through the earth, but through rock, until they find that which they are looking for.

We, too, have trouble with the promises of the Word, don't we? And how often, instead of delving deeply into the work through reading, meditating upon, and praying over the Word, we turn away and get absorbed with our disappointments. The prophets did not respond in that way. They "enquired and searched diligently," seeking from God the answer to their questions. They craved an answer, but they did not go outside of the Scriptures to find the answer. Instead, they searched within the limits of Scripture to make as sure as they possibly could that they understood what was written, and did not overlook any detail.

If such an attitude were to characterize us as the people of God today, what a difference it would make in our lives, and how it would strengthen our faith! May the Lord give us such a hunger for the truth that day by day we will searching for the treasures of the Word of God.

But this applies to our trials and testings as well. None of us knows the Word as well as we should, nor as well as we can, by the grace of God. But the Bible has the answer to our needs. As we shall see tonight in Psalm 19, there is a magnificence about the Word of God that goes beyond any other book that ever has been written, or any book that ever will be written. It was "the joy and rejoicing" of Jeremiah's heart when there was nothing in his circumstances which could give him joy. And the Psalmist

has told us in Psa. 119:165, “Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.” And the Apostle Peter was certainly speaking of the Bible when he wrote in his second epistle that God, “according” to “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

But let us not overlook the fact that the main object of the prophets’ inquiries and searches was *Christ!* He, as far as they were concerned (and they were right in this), was the key that unlocked the treasures of the Word of God. The Lord Jesus said when He was here on earth, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). The truth of salvation, and the doctrines of the Christian life, all find their center and circumference in Christ! So, as we turn to the Lord for comfort and guidance in our times of need, let us be a people who are always looking for our Lord on the pages of this sacred book which God Himself has given to us.

You see from verse 11 that they were searching the Scriptures not to see *if* the Messiah would come, but *when* He would come. And it was not to determine *if* He would suffer, but *when* He would suffer. And it was not to see *if* He would rise from the dead, but *when* He would rise from the dead. And it was not to see *if* He would enter into His glory, but *when!*

I can’t emphasize too strongly that a great deal depends upon how we approach the Scriptures. If it is with suspicion and doubt, we will never learn the truths of Scripture. But if we come, approaching it as the Word of God, then we will be blessed and come away with our faith strengthened.

All of the OT saints had to deal with the question of *time*. And the writer of the book of Hebrews, after relating the way many OT saints demonstrated their faith, concluded in this way:

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

CHAPTER 12

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despis-

ing the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 11:39-12:2).

And before these words in the book of Hebrews, we read some other encouraging words in Hebrews 10 which apply to our text for today. They are found in Heb. 10:35-37:

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

But I must hurry on to finish.

Verse 12 of our text gives us:

II. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE PROPHETS' DILEMMA (1 Pet. 1:12).

The God Who gave His Word is the One Who guides us in understanding His Word. Here in verse 12 the word “revealed” does not mean that somewhere in the Bible each of the OT saints was told from Scripture that the promised Redeemer would not come in their day, but that they came to understand it in their hearts. So “these all died in faith” (Heb. 11:13). They did not die in unbelief and despair, but they died in the assurance that God would be faithful to His promise of salvation.

Neither does this mean that God told them in what generation the Lord would come. But Peter could say looking back upon the ministry of Christ that it had always been in the plan of God that the Lord would come in their generation. And that all of those OT promises which had to do with the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, had been fulfilled in their day. And he must have been referring to the ministry of the apostles of our Lord, to himself included, when he wrote, “Which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit send down from heaven.”

So the message of the apostles was the same as the message of the OT prophets, with this difference: the prophets spoke of the Messiah and Redeemer Who was to come; the apostles were able to proclaim the glorious truth that He had come, He had died and had been raised from the dead, after which He ascended back to the Father, having completed the work of salvation. The same Holy Spirit Who gave the promises to the

OT prophets, and who blessed them as they proclaimed the good news of a coming Redeemer, was in Peter's day using apostles and NT prophets and many others to proclaim the good news that the Messiah had come, and had accomplished the work of salvation. Here we have two great ministries, that of the OT prophets and that of the NT apostles, but the message was one.

What a testimony to the faithfulness of God!

But will you notice that in closing this 12th verse of 1 Peter 1, the Apostle added what I would like to call:

III. THE APOSTLE'S POSTSCRIPT (1 Pet. 1:12b).

What is it? It is this: "Which things the angels desire to look into." What does this mean? It means that the angels in glory are interested in looking into the truths of the Word as they relate to the salvation of the people of God, and they want to do it like the OT prophets did.

Is that the way you feel about the Word of God?

Concl: We have no greater testimony to the faithfulness of God and to the truth of the Word of God than what we have in the coming, the death, and the resurrection unto glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the fulfillment of all of those promises regarding the first coming of our Lord, is proof that you and I can rest assured that our Lord is coming again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

And the ministry of our Lord gives added confirmation that you and I can trust all of the promises of God with the greatest confidence that they are true. This is what we need as we face our trials day by day.