



The Glorious Gospel
1 Peter 1:8-12

We are continuing in our series through the New Testament letter of 1 Peter this morning. This is our third sermon in the series, so let me invite you to 1 Peter chapter 1.

If you remember Peter, the same Peter who is well-known from the gospels for his time as a disciple of Jesus, is writing to persecuted Christians, that is, he is writing to followers of Jesus who were suffering because of their faith in Jesus, and he is writing to them to encourage them in their suffering. This is a letter that is meant to both comfort Christians in their suffering and to instruct Christians how to live in suffering.

And just to review, Peter has reminded them that they are “exiles” foreknown by God, chosen and seen in their suffering. And then last week we saw how Peter reminded them of the living hope they have in Jesus, that they have an inheritance waiting for them, that can never be destroyed or taken away from them. Even if they lose all other things in this life, their salvation is something that can never be lost. And he reminded them that God was using their trials for good in their lives, refining their faith and growing them into persevering exiles, people whose eyes and hearts were set on the return of Jesus.

Well, we will continue where we left off last week, which is in verse 8 and we will go through verse 12 today. It’s a remarkable set of verses that lift up the greatness of God’s work in the gospel and the way in which this glorious gospel anchors our souls in this life as we patiently endure and await the return of our Savior, Jesus.

1 Peter 1:8-12

8 Though you have not seen [Jesus], 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.

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.

So, in verses 8 and 9 Peter is actually commending them for their faith in and love for Jesus as well as their joy, that is, the fruit of the gospel in their lives. But then he goes on to maybe some confusing verses, talking about Old Testament prophets and even

angels. But ultimately as we will see, Peter is wanting them to not forget the glory of the gospel. The gospel that has called them out of the world as exiles, for which they are walking through fiery trials.

I want to talk about v. 10-12 first, and then we go back to v. 8-9.

I. THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL v. 10-12

A. THE PROPHETS MARVELED AT THE GOSPEL v. 10-12a

1 Peter 1:10-11

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.

This paragraph opens with the phrase, “Concerning this salvation...” Salvation is the focus of these verses, and before we get too far into the text, I first want to make sure we know what is meant when the Bible talks about salvation or we talk about the gospel. We talk about the gospel a lot here at Grace Road, but I don’t want anyone to be unclear as to what that is. It’s much too important to not grasp. We shouldn’t ever assume everyone knows what is meant by that word.

The word “gospel” literally means “good news.” And it refers to the good news of God’s work through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to save sinful people. To be “saved” or to experience salvation is to be saved *from* something and saved *for* something.

The Bible reveals to us that God is perfectly holy, pure, without sin and we are not. And so we are separated from God, who is holy, and our sin, our disobedience, must be judged. There is a penalty for breaking the law of God, the standard of his moral perfections. But by his mercy and grace, Jesus came to live the perfect life we could not live and died on the cross in our place. The cross was what we deserved, not what Jesus deserved. But though Jesus died on the cross, Jesus also rose again victorious over sin, death, and Satan. And now, if we turn from our sin and put our faith in Jesus and his finished work, all of our sins are forgiven and his righteousness is credited to our account as if we lived the perfect life of Jesus! We are saved from an eternity *apart* from God and we are saved for an eternity *with* God.

And all of this in spite of our sin. We don’t deserve it, we can never earn it, God’s love and forgiveness and grace given to those who repent and believe. That is good news!

And so Paul says, look again at verse 10, “Concerning this salvation,” this work, the gospel... “prophets prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and

inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.”

Now, what does that mean? Peter is referring to the prophets of the Old Testament, people who prophesied of both immediate judgment on Israel but also of future hope because of a coming Messiah. And they prophesied that the future hope God was communicating through them as God’s mouthpieces, was not only for Israel, but for the entire world!

For example, Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 55...

Isaiah 55:1-5

1 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. **2** Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. **3** Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. **4** Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. **5** Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

In other words, God says to the nations, Come! You are welcome here. I will make a covenant with you.

In the New Testament, Paul quotes Hosea to teach the diversity of the people of God...

Romans 9:25-26

25 As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’” **26** “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

And, there are many, many other Old Testament passages that point to the coming Savior. Passages that describe his birth, his suffering, his crucifixion, and his eternal reign.

The prophets, in their ministries, knew that God was doing something extraordinary in redemptive history but they weren’t sure exactly what that was going to look like, so they “searched and inquired carefully,” they paid attention, they tried to figure it out, they were fascinated because what God was doing to save a people for himself was and is the greatest work in history.

And so we are reminded here that the Bible is made up of 66 individual books, written by many different authors over a large span of time and yet the Bible is also one book that tells one story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation. That what is spoken of in the Old Testament points to the person and work of Jesus. And if you were a part of the Biblical Theology event last weekend, or you were a part of our Biblical Theology class in the Institute, you have a pretty good grasp of that.

And what Peter is reminding them here, is that the gospel is not a novel idea. It's not the latest fad that someone recently thought of and now people are encouraged to try out. We don't fully grasp the importance of this today because we live now 2,000 years after Jesus, so if you talk to most people about Jesus, at least in our culture, Jesus is not a new idea. Now, that doesn't mean they always understand the message of Jesus, but Christianity is not a new idea. But remember, Peter is addressing people in the 60s, roughly just 30ish years after Jesus' life. For them, it might have felt like this was a brand new spiritual fad sweeping through the land, but Peter is saying, NO!, this isn't new at all! This is what God has been working out from the fall of man, what God has done through Jesus and the Spirit was prophesied for many, many, many years!

And notice what Peter goes on to say in verse 12...

1 Peter 1:12

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.

Peter says, though the prophets we read about in the Old Testament were ministering to their immediate generation, ultimately they were serving us - Christians, on this side of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. In other words, the Old Testament serves us today!

And this is really important for us to grasp I think because a lot of Christians struggle with their understanding of the Old Testament. For most, we tend to struggle with grasping the content and timelines of the Old Testament. There are many, many, many strange names that span over a really long period of time in cultures totally different than ours today, and it focuses on the nation of Israel which we are not a part of. So it can definitely be easy to neglect the first half of our Bibles. For some it feels difficult, for some it just feels irrelevant.

But for some people, some Christians included, it's not that it is hard to grasp, it's that the content itself is troublesome. Perhaps you've heard, or maybe thought yourself, that God in the Old Testament seems so much different than in the New Testament. That in the Old Testament he seems really mean and vengeful, but in the New Testament he is loving and patient and gracious. So, you might be tempted to think, we as Christians don't need the Old Testament at all, or maybe, it's not that we don't *need*

the Old Testament, we don't *want* the Old Testament. So, we will stick to the New Testament.

By the way, this is not a new idea for our modern times. In fact, a second century theologian named Marcion believed and taught that the God of the Old Testament was a completely different god than the God of the New Testament. He was a lesser angry god, subservient to the God of the New Testament. Marcion, and his followers, couldn't reconcile the ways God had worked throughout history.

So, he didn't believe that Old Testament prophecies had anything to do with Jesus.

This idea was not only in the early church but there have been calls in recent days for Christians to neglect and practically disown the Old Testament. A very popular Christian pastor and author a few years ago caught headlines because he said in a sermon at his church that we should "unhitch" ourselves from the Old Testament because it is harder for us, and non-Christians, to accept.

I mean, we just finished a series through Joshua where God is often accused of genocide in the way God brought Israel into the promised land. There are challenges to the idea of creationism, other miracles like the flood and Jonah being swallowed by a whale, and so on...

And so it might be tempting to neglect the Old Testament due to its seeming irrelevance for us today or the annoying burden we feel like we have to bear because we say we believe the Bible.

But understand Peter's vision of the Scriptures here. The Old Testament is not a burden for the modern Christian to bear. Rather it is a true revelation of both the person of God and the work of God. It is further means for us to marvel at redemptive history. All of it pointing to Jesus!

Again, what God was doing through Moses, the greatest prophet, in the exodus, what God was doing through Joseph, through David and Solomon, through the prophets before, during, and after the exile, all of it pointed to the greater work of Jesus in the gospel.

Again, Peter said the prophets were serving *us!* What a privilege we have at this point in history...

B. THE ANGELS MARVEL AT THE GOSPEL v. 12b

But look again at how verse 12 ends. He says that the good news, that is, the gospel, God's work in redemptive history to save us, is something into which "the angels long to look."

The original wording there for “long to look,” carries with it the idea of a really *strong* desire, to search and inquire carefully like the prophets were said to have done.

Consider this amazing truth. Angels, who are in the presence of God, in other words, who see amazing things, who dwell in the spiritual realm, *marvel* at the work of redemption.

Remember that being saved through the work of God in Christ is an experience that is unknown for angels. They’ve never experienced the grace of Christ in redeeming them from their sin and becoming adopted sons and daughters of God. So, they just look on with amazement.

Remember in Luke 15, Luke records for us parables about God going after the one lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son, and the parables teach the absolute joy in heaven when a lost person is found. The angels marvel and rejoice at the work of salvation, even though they aren’t recipients of it. They look on with wonder.

And so we should ask, do we do the same? Do we still find joy in the gospel? We are the recipients of grace and mercy, we are the ones who have our lives and eternities changed by the gospel, of all people to find joy in the gospel, it should be us. Unfortunately though, over time, our joy can fade. Geoffrey Chaucer was the first English writer to pen the old adage, “Familiarity breeds contempt.”

At our church in Italy, I once had a woman ask if she could share some constructive criticism of my preaching. So, I said, of course, I’m not a perfect preacher, there are many ways I could probably improve. And she said, “You preach the Bible too much.” That was meant to be a criticism but it felt like a compliment.

Ever wonder, “What are we going to talk about at church this week? I wish Kevin or Cody would talk about managing debt, or political activism, or something else, just not another sermon on the gospel.”

Perhaps for some at least, “Familiarity breeds indifference.” Maybe when I was explaining the gospel earlier you thought, I’ve heard the story a million times, let’s get to something new. Maybe you, yourself, can clearly explain all the nuances of the gospel, what it means cosmically and individually, you know the theological terms, you can walk the Romans Road, state the four spiritual laws, you know the theories of the atonement, but after all this time, it’s all cerebral to you at this point. In other words, it doesn’t move you to marvel.

Peter’s reminding us here that the gospel is glorious! Even the angels of heaven, who haven’t even personally experienced the grace of God in Christ, who have witnessed the salvation of millions of people throughout history, are in awe!

So, maybe for you, familiarity with the gospel has bred contempt. You just want to hear about something else. Or maybe familiarity with the gospel has bred indifference. Understand that the biblically “Familiarity breeds perseverance. Familiarity breed endurance. Familiarity breeds joy and peace and hope and so on...”

The gospel is glorious and we should not grow tired of it...

Now, let’s go back to verse 8, the opening of our text this morning, where Peter commends them for the fruit that this glorious gospel that was marveled at by both Old Testament prophets and angels has produced in them...

II. The Fruit of the Gospel - This Glorious Gospel as Anchor in Trying Times v. 8-9

1 Peter 1:8-12

8 Though you have not seen [Jesus], 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.

So, first off, we see there is a major difference between Peter, the author of this letter, and the recipients of this letter. Peter’s readers had never seen Jesus in the flesh like Peter had. Again, Peter was one of the original 12 disciples we read about in the gospels. Peter walked and talked with Jesus. He was an eyewitness of many miracles, he saw the Transfiguration of Jesus, walked on water with Jesus, saw his arrest, crucifixion, burial and his resurrection. But these elect exiles, had not seen any of that, they had never seen Jesus, yet, they loved Jesus.

He said they believed in Jesus, they loved Jesus, and they rejoiced with joy inexpressible, even though they hadn’t seen him. In other words, their trials and suffering had not made them bitter, miserable, resentful, or angry. They rejoiced with joy in spite of their trials.

And that is the fruit of this glorious gospel. Remember, joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit Paul described in Galatians 5. This is the work of the Spirit in their hearts and our hearts.

And notice the description of their joy. It was a joy “inexpressible.” It was a joy that language fails to adequately explain. It’s a joy that you can’t describe. It doesn’t really make sense to those on the outside looking in. Maybe you’ve seen someone walk through an incredible trial and all the while their faith and joy seem to never waver. It’s a joy that just doesn’t make sense and impossible to describe, but it is nonetheless real.

And Peter says that inexpressible joy is “filled with glory.” The concept of glory in the Bible is a difficult concept to grasp but the word means weighty. Their joy is weighty. It’s substantial. It is not superficial. It is a weighty joy that anchors their feet to the ground in the midst of trials that threaten to knock them off their feet.

And again, all of this - belief/faith, love, and joy - all while never having seen Jesus in the flesh. But they've heard the gospel. They've heard what God has done and they have, by God's grace, grasped those truths as their own. And though they don't see Jesus now, they believe they will one day.

While we can't relate to the elect exiles in this letter concerning the experience of persecution in the same way as they experienced it, we do share this in common with them. We, too, have not seen Jesus in the flesh. All of our belief in him, all of our trust in him, all of our hope that is set on him, comes from having heard the message about him as told by the apostles in his word. We, too, right now live by faith and not by sight, but one day our faith will become sight. And that truth ought to anchor us - fill us with inexpressible, indescribable, weighty joy - so that we might not be swept away by life's trials and difficulties.

But it takes beholding the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ as Paul says in 2 Cor. 4. It's being reminded time and time again of the glorious gospel that has saved you. To keep fresh in your mind what you've been saved from and what you've been saved for. This was true for the elect exiles in the first century, this is true for you and me today, and this has been true for all believers throughout all of church history.

GOD'S GLORY SHINES, WE SING

Micheal Reeves, who is a theologian and church historian, wrote about this saying,

"The story of the saints down through history is a story of joy lost and found, of glory smothered and shining. From the church fathers to the Reformation to our own century, we learn that true and deep joy grows dim whenever God's glory is eclipsed. But when God's glory shines, then the saints sing for joy."¹

And then he gave a few examples, and in reality there are many, but I'll give you one example.

In the first century there was a false teaching that became pretty popular that was called Docetism. And Docetism taught that Jesus did not really come in the flesh. It only *appeared* that he came in the flesh. They could not believe that God, the Almighty, Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, would take the form of a human, that he would really stoop that low, and so they said he didn't.

Well that was eventually declared a heresy obviously because it changes the good news of the gospel. If Jesus didn't take on flesh, then he could not be our Savior. He

¹ Michael Reeves, "The Happiest Saints in History: Augustine, Calvin, Edwards, and You." *Desiring God*, October 21, 2019.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-happiest-saints-in-history>.

could not have spilled real blood for the remission of our sins. He wouldn't really be able to sympathize with our weakness, someone who wasn't tempted in every way that we are yet without sin. So there are some serious theological implications to consider.

But another implication that a man named Ignatius of Antioch believed was that if Jesus had not come and suffered in the flesh, then his suffering in the flesh was not actually following Jesus. In fact, he wrote, "If this is the case, I die for no reason."² In other words, my suffering would not truly share in Christ's sufferings. And this was of immediate concern for Ignatius because he lived not long after the time of 1 Peter, and suffered persecution for his faith in Jesus. In fact, he would eventually be thrown to wild beasts in Rome and die as a martyr.

But it was his belief in the glory of the gospel, that God, took on flesh, and died for our sins that helped Ignatius embrace the sufferings he would soon face with inexpressible joy filled with glory. Ignatius wrote:

"I implore you: do not be unseasonably kind to me. Let me be food for the wild beasts. . . . Bear with me — I know what is best for me. Now at last I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing visible or invisible envy me, so that I may reach Jesus Christ. Fire and cross and battles with wild beasts, mutilation, mangling, wrenching of bones, the hacking of limbs, the crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil — let these come upon me, only let me reach Jesus Christ!"³

And Ignatius, like the elect exiles, like us, had this boldness, this faith, joy without ever seeing Jesus in the flesh. But he believed the gospel.

Here's what was true for Ignatius, what's true for you and me as we walk through even the most unimaginable trials of life, and the truth that Peter wanted to point these elect exiles to in our passage this morning:

The gospel is so glorious - our salvation is so great - that the unseen Jesus should be more captivating than the trials right in front of our eyes. That even should we encounter opposition that can damage our flesh, it need not destroy our hearts.

We can believe in Jesus, love Jesus, and rejoice in Jesus though we wait to see him face to face.

But if we are honest, many times, our trials are more tangible to us than Jesus is. Our eyes and our minds are overwhelmed by the difficulties in front of us. But that is why we must set our eyes and hearts on the gospel.

² *Apostolic Fathers*, Trallians 10.1.

³ *Apostolic Fathers*, Romans 4.1, 5.3.

This is why we are committed to pointing our attention to the good news of the gospel week in and week out here, because it is far too easy to forget the glorious news of our redemption throughout the week. We all need fresh reminders of God's holiness, our sinfulness, God's grace, and our future hope, all based on Christ's work for us.

So we need to consider, how does the gospel land in your ears and on your heart? Is the gospel merely *interesting news* for you? Something that you merely enjoy parsing, studying, debating, and dissecting? For you, you've engaged the message with your mind but your heart has been untouched and unchanged.

Or is the gospel merely *condemning news* to you? Maybe in your time in church all you've ever heard of the message is that you and I are sinful people deserving of judgment, but that is it, and so rather than being moved to a weighty joy you bear only a weighty shame.

Well, if that is you, we want you to know that you've only heard the partial message. The gospel truly is *good news*. God, in his grace, looked at this world in all of our sin and rebellion and absolute mess, and rather than leaving us on our own, came to this world, took on flesh, went to the cross, and rose again, so that you and I might have salvation. And now reconciled back to the Lord, God has promised to never cast us out, but rather has sealed us with his Spirit until the day he returns and makes all things new, and then we will be with him forever.

This is the truth that saves, this is the truth that produces inexpressible joy even in the midst of our trials.

Let's set our minds and hearts there. Let's anchor our hope there until our faith is made sight.

VERSES

1 Peter 1:8-12

1 Peter 1:10-11

Isaiah 55:1-5

Romans 9:25-26

1 Peter 1:12

1 Peter 1:8-12

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you typically approach the Old Testament? Enthusiasm? Confusion? Fear?

What does it mean that the Bible is one book that tells one story?

Would you say that familiarity with the gospel has ever caused you to grow indifferent to the gospel? Why does that happen?

Have you ever known a Christian who has ever walked through a serious trial with what seemed like unwavering joy?

How can the gospel become more tangible to us than the trials we face?