

Praise God For Our Gospel Privilege

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[0:00] So 1 Peter 1, verse 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, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 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.

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, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And concerning this salvation, the prophets who 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.

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 have preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

[1:58] Amen. Well, history tells us that a little more than 3,000 years ago, there was a group of people who were enslaved and abused by one of the world's great ancient powers.

But they experienced a dramatic and supernatural deliverance from these captors, and many of you would know their story. This once mighty and flourishing world power and nation was brought to its knees and nearly decimated in a way that can only be explained as God's divine judgment.

And it was through this judgment that God freed these slaves who were led by an unlikely man named Moses.

And still, the days after their freedom, they were quite difficult, weren't they? The children of Israel immediately thrust into significant hardship.

Leaving Egypt didn't seem any easier than actually being in captivity in Egypt. And though they were freed from slavery and assured of God's protection, I mean, what more assurance would you need than to stand and to witness the plagues that God poured down on Egypt?

[3:21] To hear the wails of the firstborn children who had been taken, the homes of those who didn't have the blood on the doorframe. To witness that night walking through the midst of the Red Sea on dry ground.

What more assurance do you need that God is on your side? And yet, almost immediately, that comes into question for them. It doesn't come into question because they doubted what they saw. It comes into question because their experience was really, really hard. And their wanderings in the wilderness in the days leaving Egypt becomes a serious testing ground for their faith, a serious testing ground for God's promises.

And as you can remember in reading your Bibles or hearing the stories told in Sunday school growing up, what was their great sin? It became murmuring.

They're murmuring and complaining. Now, my brother and my dad and my mom and my sister-in-law, they've been to Israel many times before. And I remember the first time that my sister-in-law, Kathleen, went there as they were out in a wilderness area which would have been

part of the nation of Israel's wonderings during that time.

[4:41] Her first reaction was, no wonder they complained so much. It wasn't that life was good for them and they just were taking a lot of things for granted. And Noah's life was really, really hard.

And they began to question God's faithfulness. They began to murmur and murmur. And that murmuring developed into a kind of rebellion. Multiple times, some of them come to Moses, as you can remember, and they say, we would have been better off to just stay in captivity.

We'd have been better off to just stay in Egypt than to suffer the way that we're suffering now. And what should have been a time of joyful praise, of grateful trust in the promise of God, produced actually hateful complaints toward God and rebellion against Him.

Now, we take that picture and that understanding of what they went through and we come to 1 Peter now and we understand as Peter is writing to these Christians in the early years of the church, we understand that life in exile always brings the temptation to murmur.

It always brings the temptation to forget our privileged place as God's people. It always brings the temptation to turn away from God's promises and question whether or not He really will be faithful.

[6:02] and how many of us have been like Israel of old and we've at least wondered would it just be easier to be in captivity to this world than to be a child of God in it?

Now, how are we to withstand such temptations? As Andy read in Hebrews 4, how are we supposed to persevere when life gets really hard and the questions about God's faithfulness really become forefront in our minds?

And as we've said a few times as we've been studying through 1 Peter already, what we really need most of the time is not for someone to come along and just fix all of our problems. What we need most of the time is not for God just to take all of the hardship away and all of the pain away and all of the suffering away.

Really, most of the time what we need is for someone to remind us of the glories of the gospel. Someone to remind us of God's genuine care and love for his people and to call us back to a sincere and joyful praise to God.

And that's exactly what Peter's doing here in these first few verses. He's reminding us before he deals with our suffering and how to respond to certain things, he's going to get to all of that and it's going to be really helpful.

[7:24] But before he gets there, the first thing that he does is he reminds us of the glories of the gospel, of who we are in Christ, that we belong to him so that we might turn and worship him in response.

And in the text that's before us in verses 10 to 12 where we focus today, what Peter's doing here is he's drawing our attention to the reality of our great gospel privilege.

Our great gospel privilege. Now, the irony in this today is that the concept of privilege carries a more pejorative connotation these days than maybe in Peter's days.

Today, privilege is not something you're supposed to be grateful for. It's something you're supposed to feel shame for. Your social image in our culture can actually be marred not because of the way that you use opportunities or the way that you use the blessings that God gives you, but it can be marred just simply for the fact that you have those blessings to begin with.

Now, if we're going to understand what Peter's saying here, if we're going to understand and respond appropriately, we're going to have to take those modern notions and cultural notions of privilege. We're going to have to set those aside.

[8:38] That's a godless way to understand blessing. We're going to have to set those aside and come to this text and begin to understand exactly what Peter means to say. For him, our incredible gospel privilege is not something to be embarrassed about.

It's something that should drive us to exuberant and joyful praise even in the midst of great hardship. And of course, that's the point of this entire section, our worship.

Now, to do this, what Peter does here in 10 to 12 is he contrasts our experience of salvation today in the new covenant.

He contrasts that with two different messengers that God uses throughout history and that we read about in the scriptures. One is the prophets of old, the prophets of the Old Testament.

The second is the angels who are in heaven. Now, what's common between these two groups of messengers, God's messengers to us, is that they both, according to Peter, longed to know and to experience the fullness of grace that is available to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[9:53] Yet, God used them, we're told, to serve us. And what is it that Peter's trying to get across? Well, Peter's point is to dispel any notion that the hardship of exile that we're all going to experience at some point.

He's dispelling the notion that the hardship of exile indicates that God somehow doesn't actually care for us or doesn't care for us in the way that the scriptures tell us.

And Peter just gives us a really gentle reminder so that we might properly praise the Lord. And we've got two really main things here. The first one is this. Concerning this salvation, we are more privileged than the prophets of old.

Concerning this salvation, we are more privileged than the prophets of old. Let's look at 10 to 12 again. Peter sets the context with the very first phrase, doesn't he?

Concerning this salvation. He's not talking about more privilege in every part of life and every aspect of life. He's talking about the gospel concerning this salvation that he's been dealing with in verses 3 down to 9.

[11:05] The prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours or we might read this, the grace that was to be ours, they 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 right off the bat, we see that the salvation Peter's been referring to in this text is not new. It's not a novel idea, is it? No, the hope of eternal salvation through a Savior King, a Messiah, was anticipated for centuries.

God progressively over time revealed more and more of his saving plan through the prophets in the Old Testament and we see that ultimately revealed in the gospel and the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus that we know and that we believe and that we have experienced today was only shown in part to them and yet they intensely longed to see it fulfilled in their day.

[12:20] And Peter says they searched and they inquired diligently, they searched and they inquired carefully what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating these things. And it's not that they were concerned merely with names and dates and you start thinking about anticipating in time things today.

Everybody wants to know a person, everybody wants to know a date. Everybody wants to be able to put a name to what these future figures may be. Everybody wants to be able to put a date to when the end will come.

That's not what the prophets of old were saying. That's not what Peter means to say that they were searching for. No, they were searching the scriptures. They were searching the Bible. They were praying and inquiring of God not just to tell them a name, Jesus, or a time, first century.

No, they were searching and inquiring that all of these things they were foretelling would be revealed in their time, that they would be fulfilled in their time. It was a great longing that they would see the glories of the gospel in its fullness.

And yet, they didn't live in a time of fulfillment. It's a gracious privilege that God has allowed us to live in the time of fulfillment. For it was revealed to them, as we read in verse 12, it was revealed to them that they were serving us as they prophesied God's word.

[13:46] What has now been made clear to us in Jesus, they only saw the shadow. Now, two things stand out here about this. The first is this. We see our great gospel privilege is that we have seen the scriptures fulfilled.

fulfilled. We've seen the scriptures fulfilled. Again, this text is really important to our understanding of the reliability and credibility of the Bible.

I want you to notice Peter's very careful language here. Notice what he says. The prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours inquired what person or time the spirit in them was

indicating.

And then we see again in verse 12, it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you. What is Peter saying here?

He's being very careful with his language. The point here is that this wasn't their ideas. This wasn't their best guesses at how things would unfold.

[14:51] That's not what we have in the Old Testament. No, specific emphasis is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the scriptures through the prophetic word here. Notice Peter's language again.

They searched and inquired carefully inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating these things. It wasn't their message. They were receiving it and then conveying it. It wasn't their best guess. It wasn't their unique intuitions. They were God's direct revelation given through the work of the Spirit.

So then the prophets, they didn't create the message, they just convey it. Therefore, what they prophesied, we understand to be God's perfect and inerrant word. Now, Jesus helps us here, doesn't he?

Or, excuse me, Peter helps us again here in 2 Peter. Just flip over a page in your Bibles to 2 Peter 1. And look at verse 19.

[15:59] 2 Peter 1, verse 19. He says, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.

So what the prophet said, we have it confirmed in the person of Jesus Christ is what he means to say. And he says, you will do well to pay attention to it as a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

And then he brings clarification to how the prophets received this message. Knowing this, first of all, no prophecy of the scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

Now, what does Peter mean? He means to say that the prophets in the Old Testament, they weren't just sitting around thinking deeply about how things might turn out. And they just decided one day, this is my interpretation of the world.

This is my interpretation of world events. This is how I see things might progress so that we might actually achieve salvation in some sense. Peter says, no, that's not how this happened.

[17:02] That's not how this works. And he continues on, verse 21. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Now, he's just echoing what he's saying here in his first letter, which is what? These prophets, they prophesied about something that God was doing in them, something that God was saying to them, and they were conveying this truth so that we understand when we read our Bibles, what we're reading is not man's word.

We're reading God's word given through men. That's how Peter is helping us to understand it. But the trouble for the prophets in the Old Testament was that the message they were given wasn't complete.

It was shadows. In the law, through Moses, we have pictures, mostly. We get into the Psalms and the prophets and the other letters, and we start to have specific statements and prophecies given to specific groups of people, and all of them are coming from God, but all of them are in shadowy form.

And these men were trying to put it all together. They're trying to understand it. They want to see it fulfilled. They searched and inquired carefully, but then the Spirit reveals that theirs was not a time of fulfillment.

[18:27] That's not true for us. And that's Peter's point. They were serving us in the things that have now been announced. They were serving us in the things that have now been revealed in the gospel.

They had the shadow, but we have the substance. Now, how can we know that the prophets of the Old Testament were true prophets?

How can we know that what they said really did come from God? How can we know that it can be trusted? Because we live in the time of fulfillment. Because we live in the time in which Jesus has come, and Jesus has lived, and Jesus has died, and Jesus has raised, and he's ascended.

We live in the time where we can see the picture becoming very, very clear in a way that they couldn't. And that's a great privilege. And Peter writes to these Christians who were struggling, and he says, remember the privilege you have.

You could have been suffering at the time of the prophets. the faith was still required the same. God was still the same. His promises were still the same, but the revelation was different.

[19:39] There wasn't as much to piece together yet. Jesus had not yet come. It would have been much harder to live in that time. Think about your privilege, he says. You live in the time of fulfillment.

But that's not the only thing he says. That brings us to this second thing here. We not only see now that the scriptures are fulfilled, but we see that the gospel is now revealed. It's revealed.

Paul's language for this often is mystery. When Paul uses the language of mystery, what he means is something that was concealed in the Old Testament, something that was hard to understand and comprehend in its fullness in the Old Testament, that mystery now being revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and his life and his death and his resurrection.

And what we're reminded here is that the central focus of all the scriptures, whether the Old Testament or the New, is the good news of salvation through Jesus.

You say, how can we know that Peter's on about that? Well, just look at the verse. What is it that they were inquiring about? In verse 11, they were inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted what?

[20:53] The sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. What does Peter mean to tell us? Well, he's echoing a truth that we see over and over in the New Testament, and that is all the scriptures have one giant message.

It is a message of salvation. It is a message of salvation through God's King, through God's Savior, through Jesus Christ. All of it pointing us to him and to his message.

And that salvation message has always been one of suffering that precedes glory. And sometimes we think that this idea of a suffering Messiah, that it is a New Testament construct.

That no one even thought about that until Jesus actually comes and they were just a huge surprise that he was crucified. And that just isn't true. The Jews of the first century, they were interested in a suffering Messiah, but that was because of the hardness of their heart.

It wasn't because of some silence in the scriptures. And we talked about this a lot this summer as we were working through the Psalms. Think about the pictures and the prophecies of the Old Testament. From the very beginning, Genesis chapter 3, 15, the very first prophecy of a Messiah, God himself gives to Adam.

[22:11] And what is it that he says? Or he gives it to Eve. What is it that he says? I will bring forth a seed from you. And he will crush the head of the serpent.

But the serpent will crush his heel, bruise his heel. Even there, just in shadowy form, we have suffering, not just for us, suffering for the Savior before we get the glory that the seed of the woman is meant to bring and to display.

And we see it in the law. We see it in the pictures of the sacrifices. We see it maybe most clearly in the person of David, the Old Testament, and his sufferings.

And the way he even understood his own sufferings as pointing to the sufferings of Christ. We get to Isaiah 53, which basically just spells it all out for us, doesn't it? So when we get to the Gospels and we find that the Christ is suffering, it shouldn't be a surprise to us.

It certainly wasn't a surprise to the prophets that Peter was writing about. Because that's exactly the thing they were inquiring of God about. When would this Messiah come and suffer so that his sufferings would then bring glories that would follow?

[23:29] And Jesus helps us, doesn't he? Luke 24. This is the resurrection night. Jesus appears to his disciples in the room in Jerusalem. And what is it that he says?

These are my words I spoke to you while I was still with you. That everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Now when Jesus says the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, he's speaking of the whole of the Old Testament.

Those were the three Hebrew divisions of the Old Testament scriptures. He's speaking of them all. And he says, this is what I've been telling you. That everything about me in the scriptures must be fulfilled. And then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.

And he said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer. But then he says their subsequent glories. And on the third day, rise from the dead so that repentance for the forgiveness of sins may be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

What a great privilege we have. We live in a time when the scriptures are fulfilled and we can see it and we can believe it. We also live in a time when the gospel has been revealed.

[24:49] What is this good news? What's all about Jesus? And the privilege of it comes to the forefront in verse 12. All of this has been revealed to us in what?

The preaching of the good news. The preaching of the gospel. And again, the emphasis is given to the work of the spirit. The same spirit that inspired the prophets also speaks authoritatively through the gospel message.

All kinds of strange ideas exist about the work of the spirit. Peter here reminds us that the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to call attention to Jesus Christ.

That's his purpose. That's what he does. He points us to Christ in the prophets and he calls us to Christ in the preaching of the gospel. So that when the good news of the gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit works to bring life to dead sinners.

And it's our great privilege to live in the time of fulfillment as the spirit works to reveal Christ and to bring us salvation. This is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15.

[26:04] That great resurrection passage. Remember what he said. This is the gospel that we've proclaimed. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. That he was buried and that he rose from the dead according to the scriptures and has been seen by all the witnesses.

And then he launches into that amazing chapter on Christ's resurrection which leads to our future resurrection. To eternal life. All of it based in the scriptures.

All of it rooted in the work of the Holy Spirit. All of it provided so that you and I might know Jesus and be saved. What is his sufferings?

His sufferings is an atonement for our sin. What is his glories? His resurrection to new life. His ascension to the throne. And eventually his future return.

But what's the point of all of it? Why is Peter saying all of this? He's telling us to take our eyes off of our exile for a moment. And before we begin to question whether or not God really does love us.

[27:12] Before we begin to question whether or not God really does care about us even in our suffering. He reminds us of all that God has done so that we might have the privilege and the clarity of the gospel.

So that he might save us. And Peter says remember these things and praise him. So we see that we're more privileged than the prophets of old.

There's just one more note to make. We're also more privileged concerning the salvation than the angels in heaven. And this is surprising isn't it?

We get to the end of this verse and it kind of comes out of nowhere doesn't it? Who of us if you hadn't read this passage before would have ever expected that suddenly Peter's going to say you know what? You're a little better off than the angels too.

It's a surprise isn't it? He doesn't explain very much. We can get a little bit from it doesn't we? Can't we? Just notice what he says. Verse 12 It was revealed to them they were serving not themselves but you and the things that have now been revealed in the good news by the spirit.

[28:15] things into which angels long to look. Now we need to understand this rightly by understanding what Peter isn't saying.

He didn't mean that exile is better than heaven. Right? If the angels are in heaven and we are in exile on earth in this life how in the world are we more privileged than they?

Well that's not what Peter's talking about. He certainly doesn't mean to say that the angels are somehow disadvantaged though they are in the very presence of God. It's not a matter of being advantaged or disadvantaged.

That would be a ludicrous idea. This is why context matters when we read our Bibles isn't it? And what's the very first phrase that Peter uses in verse 10 when he launches into this?

Concerning this salvation. Concerning the fullness of the experience of the gospel of Jesus that he told us in verses 3 to 5 secures a future inheritance that's imperishable and undefiled and unfaded. [29:22] That concerns a present joy that we experience even in the midst of present grief. That's what it's concerning. He doesn't mean to say that the angels are disadvantaged.

He's relating this specifically to grace and salvation. Now what the angels have in common with the prophets is that they too long to see and understand the fullness of the gospel but in a different way.

The prophets longed for greater knowledge and for the fulfillment. That's not the same for the angels. They have the knowledge. They have the intellect. They know it. They've seen the fulfillment.

They don't need that part. What is it that they lack? They lack the experience of the grace of God and salvation. That's the thing that fascinates them.

They possess knowledge of the gospel but they cannot experience God's saving action as you and I can. They haven't sinned therefore they need no redemption.

[30:26] They haven't been an enemy of God therefore they don't need to be made children of God like happens in the new birth that Peter talks about in verse 3.

They don't experience a present grief as we experience therefore there's not really necessary to bring to mind their present joy. They have nothing for which to contrast with in their very experience and it's in this way that Peter says they're fascinated by the gospel and the saving and redemptive effects of God's love in our lives.

And yet it's our great gospel privilege to not only understand the message but to truly experience its saving power. That's what Paul reminds us of in Romans 1.

He's not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation. We can see it revealed.

We can see it fulfilled but we can also experience the fullness of its saving effects because the same spirit who worked to give the message to the prophets the same spirit who sends the angels on their way in the New Testament and in the Old Testament to give their message from God is the same spirit who works in the preaching of the gospel to bring you from death to life.

To break up the hardness of your heart as Andy prayed earlier to break up the hardness of your heart so that you might believe the gospel and be saved. And Peter says we ought to remember this privilege.

[32:03] But you can't remember something you haven't experienced and we have to at least ask that question. Have you experienced the saving power of God in the gospel? I don't mean have you subscribed to a kind of religion or Christianity certain kind of practice or certain type of denomination whatever it may be but have you been born again?

Do you have the present joy that was spoken about in verses 6 to 9 that can really only come because of something God is doing in you? Have you experienced the saving effects so that you can actually praise God?

Have you come to faith in Christ? As we close this portion of Peter's letter we need to acknowledge that if we're going to thrive in exile which is what this letter is about I think it's going to require that we remember the glorious grace of God in our salvation and that we spend our days of exile in sincere and joyful worship and part of what it means to do that is to express humble gratitude at our great gospel privilege can you imagine if Israel's response was different coming out of Egypt?

Their circumstances would not have changed had they come out of Egypt and just decided you know what this is really hard but we trust the Lord and we're going to praise Him because He has made us His home and He has redeemed us with a tremendous salvation out of Egypt you know that wouldn't have changed their circumstance they still would have had to go through the wilderness they still would have been tested over and over at the waters of Meribah the various times when they were thirsting to death and hungry but they would have entered the rest that's Hebrews 4 what Andy read to us but instead of trusting God they rebelled we don't want to live that way right?

the temptation that comes along with exile is to turn away to give it up to not believe the gospel of Jesus is something the prophets long to better understand and to see fulfilled in their days it's something the angels in heaven long to know by personal experience and then there's us by God's

grace we are privileged to have both the fullness of revelation and the experience of salvation so that we can praise God in a way not possible for them and to recognize this should dispel any thought in the wilderness that God doesn't love you that he doesn't care about you or that he's not watching over you or that he doesn't care about your suffering of course he does and how do you know because of this great salvation that you have been privileged to know and experience in your life so what do we do then we endure and we persevere but if we're going to do it in a way that's thriving rather than merely surviving we're going to have to worship and worship is always about [35:43] Jesus and what he has done for us and so we bless our God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ for this great salvation he's provided and he's going to to him to him to him to him to him to him