

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 5, 2019 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT SALVATION? – PART 2 *1 Peter 1:10-12*

We began our study through 1 and 2 Peter weeks ago entitled “Full of Hope-full: How to Make the Best of Time Out of Your Worst of Times.” The question is how do I develop that kind of life and faith that enable me to be full of “hope-fullness” even in the midst of the “worst of time”... in times of hardship, suffering, and the struggles of this life or as in the case of those in Peter’s day, extreme persecution. That is where First Peter comes in. The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life (trials of many kinds), we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. God desires for you to live an overcoming life! Jesus, Himself, said in John 16:33, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” And in 1 John 5:4-5, “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” Christians are overcomers and truly are to live hope-filled Christian lives every day, but let’s be honest, there are many trial and struggles, heartaches and difficulties along... times of suffering that can daily rob us of our joy and paralyze our faith, steal our hope, and destroy our relationship and weaken our walk... times of suffering can embitter and defeat us if we let it. 1 Peter was written to help believer’s believe and grow even in times of suffering... to be “Full of Hope-full.”

Before we study the details of this fascinating letter... one of only two books in all of the Bible written by Jesus closest disciples and a leader of the disciples, and both very short... before we get into our study let’s be reminded of some of the most important background information for the book.

5 Important Background Information for the Book of 1 Peter:

1. **The author of the book of 1 Peter is the APOSTLE PETER, the head and lead spokesman for Jesus' twelve disciples** - The New Testament had four different names for Peter: Simeon (the Hebrew for Peter's original name, Acts 15:14, 2 Peter 1:1), Simon (the Greek name for Simeon applied 49 times in the New Testament), Cephas (a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for rock [קִפָּא קηφָא]; this is used to play off of πέτρα), Peter (Πέτρος) the leader and spokesman for the early disciples. This is how he is addressed in the greeting emphasizing his authority to speak. The early New Testament Church almost exclusively regarded Peter as the author of the letter. And of course there is the internal evidence supporting Peter's authorship, the letter claims to be from "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1), the writer claims to be the readers "fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1), the writer identifies "Silas" (Silvanus) as one who helped him to write the letter (1 Peter 5:12; see also Acts 15:22 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1), the writer also sends greetings from Mark (1 Peter 5:13; see Acts 12:12).
2. **The book of 1 Peter (like Paul's letter to the Galatians) is actually a CIRCULAR LETTER, meant to be circulated to multiple early New Testament churches and believers** - Peter is a letter written in normal epistle form and style. The rhetorical and didactic nature of the letter may mean that it was intended to be read aloud to the congregations. It is best to see this letter as a circular type of letter in its present form which was directed to all the churches in the areas mentioned in northern Asia minor.
3. **The recipient of Peter's letter (also like Paul's letter to the Galatians) were probably a mixed group of JEWISH and GENTILE believers who were scattered throughout the five Roman provinces of ASIA MINOR in what is present day Turkey** – This is a circular (or general) letter, but unlike the others, it identifies its recipients. The letter is addressed to those who are from places in northern Asia Minor or modern Turkey (1:1): Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia.
4. **The letter was written around AD 64, either before or during the Neronian persecution, which helps to date the writing** – Tradition holds that both Paul and Peter were victims of persecution under Nero at Rome after the disastrous fire in the city of Rome on July 19 of AD 64. The death of Paul is considered to be before Peter's. The timing of Paul's death does not really affect the date of 1 Peter. The letter was written from "Babylon" (1 Peter 5:13) which was probably a cryptic title for Rome... the head of the then pagan, anti-God world (see Rev. 14:8, 17:5&18).
5. **The purpose of 1 Peter is to encourage and enable Christians/believer to face PERSECUTION and SUFFERING with hope in the grace of God** - Although 1 Peter does bare the form of a letter, the tone is that of a homiletical, teaching, instructional sermon designed to provide direction for believers under persecution; at times it also includes theological considerations which support the ethical exhortations, and to exhort his readers under persecution to follow the example of Christ whose life was characterized by patient suffering

Now with those brief reminder of the background to Peter's great letter, let look at Peter's word in the first chapter of his letter... pay close attention to verses 10-12, that is where we will be focusing our attention in this study.

[“]¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, ¹¹searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹²To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.”—¹Peter 1:1-12 (NKJV) *focus vv.6-9

Discussion Questions

1. Must we feel our sinfulness in order to know God’s grace? Is this only at salvation or ongoing?
 2. Does the Old Testament apply to us who are not under the Law? How?
 3. Why is the cross the center of our salvation? What practical implications does this have?
 4. Is your salvation truly the greatest thing in your life? If not, why not?
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As you think about your life, what consistently brings you the most joy?

What consistently bring you the most joy in your life? List below those things in your life that consistently bring you the most joy.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Some might answer, “My family”; but for others their family is the source of their greatest pain. Some may say, “My friendships” or “this new guy (or gal) I’m dating.” A few may answer, “My job” or “career.” Some may not be honest enough to say it, but they really live for their possessions or hobbies or leisure activities. Or, some might be brutally honest in saying, “I don’t have much joy in my life.”

For every Christian, the true answer ought to be, “The thing that brings me the most joy in life is my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and the full salvation He has provided.” I mean, think about it, as a Christian... as a believer, the Lord and His salvation ought to be the hub of our lives from which radiate out the spokes of joy in our families, our friendships, our jobs, our possessions, and our other activities. If you take away the hub, everything else would crumble into meaningless ruin.

Yet I fear that for too many Christians, salvation is nice, but not necessary. It adds a little fulfillment to their well-rounded lives, but it’s not the essential core without which life would disintegrate. If they were honest, they would ask with a shrug of their shoulders, “**What’s so great about salvation?**”

Now think about this... God has a sure-fire method of getting us to answer that question: He puts us in the fires of affliction! Trials have a way of getting us to focus on the bare essentials of life. What really matters? What am I living for? What gives life meaning and makes it count? And, of course, the more life-threatening the trials, the more focused we are. Think of this...

- 1. When do we get the most serious about our faith?**
- 2. When does our prayer life get fervent and earnest?**
- 3. When do we really dig into and become most concentrated on our salvation, and really begin to be sure everything is in play and our heart is truly right? When?**

We know the answer, don’t we? When our feet are in the fire, our back are against the wall and we have no other recourse we turn to God and things get serious. Not think about it... why is that do you think? Let me suggest to you about 5 reasons:

5 Possible Reasons It May Take the Fires of Affliction Before we Get Serious About our Faith:

- 1. The reality of coming face to face with our own mortality** – I might not survive this!
- 2. The inner struggle of our fierce independence up against our need and dependence on God** – I can do it! I can handle it! I can take care of myself!
- 3. The distraction of the busyness of our lives** – Sometimes it takes affliction, struggle, trial, hardship to slow us down enough to see our need for God and get serious about our faith.
- 4. The status quo of the lives of many Christians** – We often get lulled to sleep as believers! We get so use to the mundane routine of living our Christian lives, especially in our Western mindset, that it often takes the struggles and trial of life to shake us out of our comfort zone and get us serious about our faith.
- 5. The seriousness of the circumstances of the situation itself** – In some sense, it is only natural that difficulties and hardships, trials, struggles, heartaches, suffering would cause us to lean in closer to our ultimate Helper and the help that comes from Him... the Lord.

In 1777, Dr. William Dodd, a well-known London clergyman, was condemned to be hanged for forgery. When his last sermon, delivered in prison, was published, a friend commented to Dr. Samuel Johnson, a contemporary of Dr. William Dodd, that the effort was far better than he had thought the man capable of. Dr. Johnson’s classic reply was, “**Depend upon it, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.**”

Peter's readers were enduring affliction, namely extreme persecution and threat from both the Roman government and Jewish religious leaders. Some may have been facing martyrdom for their faith. Some were under pressure in their homes from pagan spouses, in their jobs from pagan employers, and in their communities from pagan acquaintances. Some were probably wondering, "Why suffer for our faith? Is it worth all the pain I'm going through?" Peter's answer is to get them to look up from their suffering to their salvation and see, "It's more than worth it because our salvation is so great! The salvation we enjoy is that which the prophets struggled to understand and into which the angels long to look!"

KEY TAKE AWAY: Because our salvation is so great, we should joyfully endure present suffering in light of the future glory.

To trace Peter's flow of thought have to follow it through the first chapters.

The Past, Present, and Future Hope of Salvation for Suffering Believers:

1. **The certainty of their (a believer's) future inheritance helps them in the midst of their suffering** - In 1 Peter 1:3-5 Peter points his readers to the greatness and certainty of their future inheritance in Christ.
2. **The help their (a believer's) salvation provides in the present as they face suffering** - In 1:6-9, he shows how this great salvation results in inexpressible joy, even in the midst of present trials.
3. **The promise provided by past prophetic revelation concerning the great salvation that is theirs (a believers)** - In 1 Peter 1:10-12... our passage, Peter goes back to the past prophetic revelation about this great salvation to show how unsearchable it is—neither the prophets nor the angels fully grasped it—and how privileged we are who have received it.

He means to encourage believers in the midst of trials. Just as Christ first suffered and then was glorified, so Christians may now suffer, but there's glory ahead. If we will focus on the incomprehensible greatness of our salvation, we can joyfully endure present trials.

THE GREATNESS OF OUR SALVATION DESCRIBED BY PETER

Peter words in 1 Peter 1:10-12... our text, shows five reasons our salvation is great:

5 Reasons Our Salvation is So Great:

1. **Our Salvation is great because it is the message of God's grace** - Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:10, "¹⁰ Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you." Notice Peter's use of the word "grace" in verse 10 (and in verse 13) as a synonym for the salvation which we have received but won't completely understand until Christ returns. The concept and teach of salvation by "grace" and "grace" itself is a much deeper and fuller subject than what is usually realized. We sing of it in "Amazing Grace" and have too-simplistic definitions of it that don't really take in the fullness and depth of its meaning and implications for our lives and faith. "Grace" all of salvation. We speak of who we are saved, we are being saved and we will be saved. Remember, there are three tenses of our salvation:

3 Tenses of Our Salvation:

- (1) Past... we were saved from sin's penalty when we put our faith in Christ = **Justification** – Some may identify this as the doctrine of "justification." The teaching of justification by faith is what separates Biblical Christianity from all other belief systems. In every religion, and in some branches of what is called "Christianity," man is working his way to God. **Only in true, biblical Christianity is man saved as a result of grace through faith.** Only when we get back to the Bible do we see that justification is by faith, apart from works.

What is Justification:

1. **The word *justified* means "pronounced or treated as righteous"** - For a Christian, justification is the act of God not only forgiving the believer's sins but imputing to him the righteousness of Christ.
2. **The Bible states in several places that justification only comes through faith (e.g., Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:24).** – Romans 5:1 says, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" And in Galatians 3:24 Paul writes, "*There the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*"
3. **Justification is not earned through our own works; rather, we are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5)** – Paul says in Ephesians 2:8, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*" And in Titus 3:4-7 Paul give us these beautiful words, "*But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*" We are justified and saved/made right with God by grace through "faith," not by any works that we have done nor by religious works, duty, or activity. **Without an understanding of justification by faith alone, we cannot truly perceive the glorious gift of grace—God's "unmerited favor"** becomes "merited" in our minds, and we begin to think we deserve salvation
4. **The Christian, being declared righteous, is thus freed from the guilt of sin** – We do not have to carry around the weight and guilt of our sin, because we have been not only forgiven, but justified by Christ Jesus. A good definition of "justification" that is something applied is "**being made just as if I'd never sinned.**"
5. **Justification is a completed work of God, and it is instantaneous, as opposed to sanctification, which is an ongoing process of growth by which we become more Christ-like** - Justification may be defined as the initial act of being saved. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*" Understanding the doctrine of justification is important for a Christian. First, it is the very knowledge of justification and of grace that motivates good works and spiritual growth; thus, justification leads to

sanctification. Also, the fact that justification is a finished work of God means that Christians have assurance of their salvation. In God's eyes, believers have the righteousness necessary to gain eternal life. Once a person is justified, there is nothing else he needs in order to gain entrance into heaven. Since justification comes by faith in Christ, based on His work on our behalf, our own works are disqualified as a means of salvation (Romans 3:28). There exist vast religious systems with complex theologies that teach the false doctrine of justification by works. But they are teaching "a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all."

The doctrine of justification by faith helps us maintain "pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Holding to justification by faith keeps us from falling for the lie that we can earn heaven. There is no ritual, no sacrament, no deed that can make us worthy of the righteousness of Christ. It is only by His grace, in response to our faith, that God has credited to us the holiness of His Son. Both Old and New Testaments say, "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

- (2) Present... we are being saved from sin's power as we walk by faith = Sanctification** - Sanctification is God's will for us. As Paul said it in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." Have you ever wondered what God's will if for you? It is your sanctification. I guess that make it very important to know what that is... what "sanctification" is. The word *sanctification* is related to the word *saint*; both words have to do with holiness. To "sanctify" something is to set it apart for special use; to "sanctify" a person is to make him holy. Jesus had a lot to say about sanctification in John 17... the chapter I call "The Lord's Prayer." Listen to Jesus words/prayer in John 17:15-17, "¹⁵I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify¹⁷ them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

What is Sanctification:

1. **In Christian theology, sanctification is a state of separation unto God** – All true, born-again believers enter into this state when they are born of God. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "*But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness (as in justification) and sanctification and redemption (as in glorification).*" The sanctification mentioned in this verse is a once-for-ever separation of believers unto God.
2. **Sanctification is a work God performs in our lives, sometimes called "positional" sanctification** - It is an intricate part of our salvation and our connection with Christ. (**READ: Hebrews 10:5-10**) The writer of Hebrews describes it in Hebrews 10:10, "*By that (by the giving of His life on our behalf on the cross... the word of God through Christ) will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" It is thoroughly and completely the work of God and not us. Theologians sometimes refer to this state

of holiness before God as “positional” sanctification... it is the same as justification. While we are *positionally* holy (“set free from every sin” by the blood of Christ, Acts 13:39), we know that we still sin (1 John 1:10) That’s why the Bible also refers to sanctification as a practical experience of our separation unto God.

- 3. Sanctification also has to do with our spiritual progress and growth, sometimes called “Progressive” or “experiential” sanctification -** “Progressive” or “experiential” sanctification is the effect of obedience to the Word of God in one’s life. It is the same as growing in the Lord or spiritual maturity. God started the work of making us like Christ, and He is continuing it. As Paul said in **Philippians 1:6**, “*Being confident of this very things, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” This type of sanctification is to be pursued by the believer earnestly. Look down at verse 15 in 1 Peter 1, “*But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.*” We are to be striving, working toward, pursuing holiness... Christ-likeness. And in **Hebrews 12:14** is communicated that we are to be striving against and fighting against our very sin nature, “*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*” We are to be growing, progressing in our Christian life in spiritual growth and maturity. It is never okay for a Christian to stay a baby Christian.
- 4. Progressive sanctification has in view the setting apart of believers for the purpose for which they are sent into the world –** As Jesus said it... prayed it, really in **John 17:18-19**, “*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.*” That Jesus set Himself apart for God’s purpose is both the basis and the condition of our being set apart (see John 10:36). We are sanctified and sent because Jesus was. Our Lord’s sanctification is the pattern of and power for our own. The sending and the sanctifying are inseparable. On this account we are called “saints” (*hagioi* in the Greek), or “sanctified ones.” Prior to salvation, our behavior bore witness to our standing in the world in separation from God, but now our behavior should bear witness to our standing before God in separation from the world. Little by little, every day, “those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14, ESV) are becoming more like Christ.
- 5. There is another sense in which the word *sanctification* is used in Scripture—a “complete” or “ultimate” sanctification -** This is the same as/similar to glorification. Paul prays in **1 Thessalonians 5:23**, “*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Elsewhere, Paul speaks of Christ as “the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27) and links the glorious appearing of Christ to our personal glorification, “*When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*” (Colossians 3:4). This glorified state will be our ultimate separation from sin, a total sanctification in every regard. “We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

To summarize, “sanctification” is a translation of the Greek word *hagiasmos*, meaning “holiness” or “a separation.” In the past, God granted us justification, a once-for-all, positional holiness in Christ. Now, God guides us to maturity, a practical, progressive holiness. In the future, God will give us glorification, a permanent, ultimate holiness. These three phases of sanctification separate the believer from the penalty of sin (justification), the power of sin (maturity), and the presence of sin (glorification).

- (3) Future... ultimately, we shall be saved from sin's presence as we persevere by faith = Glorification** - The short answer is that “glorification” is God's final removal of sin from the life of the saints (i.e., everyone who is saved) in the eternal state... which is very much what Peter is talking about in 1 Peter. Paul speaks of it in Romans 8:18, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” In 2 Corinthians 4:17, “*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.*” At Christ’s coming, the glory of God (Romans 5:2)—His honor, praise, majesty, and holiness—will be realized in us; instead of being mortals burdened with sin nature, we will be changed into holy immortals with direct and unhindered access to God’s presence, and we will enjoy holy communion with Him throughout eternity. In considering glorification, we should focus on Christ, for He is every Christian’s “blessed hope”; also, we may consider final glorification as the culmination of sanctification.

I want to camp on the word “*grace*” for a minute, both because it is an important word to Peter (used ten times in this book: 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19-20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12) and because it is a widely misunderstood concept in our day. Many Christians confuse grace for a hang-loose, laid-back flavor of Christianity that urges us not to be too rough on ourselves and not to be judgmental of others. We end up being tolerant of all sorts of sin that the Bible strongly confronts.

Keys in Understanding Grace:

- (1) Where does the Christian (true believer) stand with God?** – (see Romans 5:1-2a)

A genuine Christian (true believer) stands in God’s unmerited/undeserved favor... **GRACE. STANDING IN GRACE** – The Apostle Paul has an interesting concept about grace that is very important in how it fits with the Salvation that is ours. It is found in Paul’s letter to the Romans in Romans 5:1-11.

- (2) What is grace? –**

- (a) Write your own definition of grace –** Grace is the free, undeserved and unearned “just because I love you” gift of God

- (b) Listen as the following verses of Scripture are read and answer the corresponding question –**

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** – “*For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.*”

-Who is grace from? God

-What is grace? A free gift (Greek word for grace is “charis” or “karis” and can be translated either as the word “grace” or “gift.”)

- Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

-What is the free gift of God or the grace of God? Eternal life (grace = eternal life/salvation)

- True or False (circle one) – Christians are constantly moving in and out of a state of God’s grace. *Answer: False, Christians are “standing in grace and not constantly moving in and out of a state of grace according to Romans 5:1-2a.”

(3) Understanding grace – Some good definition of grace for our own understanding.

- Webster’s Dictionary – “Unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration and sanctification.”
- Dr. John MacArthur – “Grace is God’s unmerited favor by which he saves us and makes us righteous. It is based solely on His sovereign love, which is manifested in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sin. It is not the result of any worthiness on our part. Once we are saved we stand in grace.”
- Grace Acrostic – Each letter of the word “GRACE” stands for a part of the definition and understanding of what grace is.

G - God’s

R - Righteousness

A - At

C - Christ’s

E - Expense

(4) Why grace? Why is grace necessary at all? – A very apparent answer to that question would be that apart from grace man could not be saved, but a thorough investigation of the question (Why grace?) reveals an even deeper understanding of grace itself and a believers eternal security.

Why Grace? The 2 Part Short Answer:

1. Our total inaccessibility of God –
2. Our sole source of accessibility to God - Our sole source of accessibility to God is only through Christ, who is His grace gift to us (see John 3:16). We are totally helpless and hopeless on our own. God is not accessible to you except through Christ! You can’t approach Him!

Let’s look at each one of these, one at a time...

Our total inaccessibility of God – The word “access” is used two other times in the New Testament by Paul to refer to access to God.

True or False (circle one) - It was shocking and incomprehensible to the Jewish people of Paul’s day that they could have direct access to God. *Answer: True, The Jewish people of Paul’s day believed that God was completely unapproachable

and that they must go through the “priest” or “high priest” to get to God. They could not approach God on their own.

Some Biblical Examples:

- Exodus 19:9-13 –

-Who is the Lord speaking to in this passage and who is He speaking about? God is speaking to Moses about the people (the children of Israel) (see vv.9-10.).

-What are God’s requirements in this passage before the people may approach Him? They were to consecrate themselves and wash their clothes (be clean) before approaching God (v.10). (see Leviticus 11:44-45)

-Is God seen in this passage as approachable or unapproachable? Why? Perhaps approachable, but only by His standards, which actually no one was ever able to fully meet (v.13).

- 1 Kings 8:6-11 –

-Who brought the ark of the Lord to the Temple and where was it placed? The priests brought the ark of the Lord to the Temple and placed it in the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies)

-Who was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place and what does this say about the approachability of God by His people? Only the priests were allowed to enter the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies) and that only once a year with great caution (a rope and a bell). God could only be approached by those set apart by God.

-What happened after the ark was placed in the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies)? God filled the place with His glory and the priests could not stay in there... they had to leave.

-In thinking about the Holy of Holies and this passage would you say that God was approachable or unapproachable? Why? God was so holy that man’s sinful condition made it impossible for him to approach God. In that sense God was unapproachable by sinful man. Once again we can see that God was approachable, but only by His standards.

- Matthew 27:45-54 –

-What words did Jesus cry out in a loud voice just before he died on the cross, and what do you think was the significance of that statement for believers? Jesus cried out, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me!” Jesus took in Himself our sin and uncleanness, and thus became unapproachable by God because of our sin, He took our punishment.

*When we say he took the punishment for sin was the ‘cross’ the punishment or was God turning His back on Jesus as He carried our sin the punishment (remember sinful man cannot approach Holy God? I’m not so sure that the punishment wasn’t God turning His back on Jesus who was covered with our sin.

-What happened at the Temple the moment Jesus died, and why do you think Matthew included this strange event in his record of the crucifixion? The temple veil/curtain leading to the Holy of Holies was torn in two. The tearing

of the veil (the Temple curtain) signified that he way into God's presence was now open to all through a new and living way. The fact that it split (tore) from top to bottom shows that no man had split the veil. God did it! Salvation and access are fully at God's initiative... not mans.

-What does this say about the approachability of God in your opinion? It says to us that God is now approachable by you and I because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross.

Our solid source of accessibility to God – Christ's death changed the Old Testament view of access to God.

J E S U S C H R I S T

3 Important Accessibility Passages:

1. Hebrews 4:16 – We can come boldly (with confidence)

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

KJV says, *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

2. Hebrews 9:1-15 – We have had a way opened for us

(see vv.7,11,12,15) ^{*"¹¹ But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. ¹² He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption."*}

3. Hebrews 10:19-22 – We can draw near with full assurance

^{*"¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."*}

So understand "grace" is *undeserved favor*. You cannot appreciate God's grace until you both understand cognitively and feel emotionally how unworthy you are to receive anything other than judgment from the holy God. All true Christians agree that we're sinners, but many quickly turn around and argue that we're worthy persons, not unworthy. We're being told that the root of all our problems is low self-esteem. So one of the major tasks for Christians has become to build their self-esteem.

One best selling book confronts the notion that we should view ourselves as sinners saved by grace: Is that who you really are? No way! The Bible doesn't refer to believers as sinners, not even sinners saved by grace. Believers are called saints—holy ones—who occasionally sin. (Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* [Harvest House], p. 44.) I was raised in a Christian home and believed in Christ at an early age. I've lived a relatively

clean life. I've always subscribed to the biblical teaching that I am a sinner. But as a young Christian, I had no idea how sinful my heart really is. The more I've grown in Christ, the more I see how desperately wicked I am, which makes me cling to the cross more fiercely and revel in God's grace more joyously. I've had to learn that grace isn't God giving a little boost to a basically decent, churchgoing young man. Grace is God's mercy to me whom He justly could send to hell. It's only when I feel how much He has forgiven me that I will love Him much because of the wonder of His grace.

God's grace, properly understood, is not at odds with obedience to God's Word. Rather, grace is the motivation for obedience (Romans 2:4). No sooner does Peter tell us that we should fix our hope completely on God's grace (1:13) than he tells us to be obedient and holy (1:14-15). An emphasis on grace is not opposed to an emphasis on obedience. But don't miss the point: Our salvation is great because it's the message of God's grace. That means that there's hope for every sinner, no matter how great his sin! That's good news! The only thing that keeps you from experiencing God's grace is your pride that tells yourself that you're a good person who doesn't need grace. If you'll confess your sin, the cross of Christ is sufficient to forgive you completely.

- 2. Our salvation is great because it was predicted by the Old Testament prophets -** Notice Peter's words again in verses 10-11, "¹⁰*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,* ¹¹*searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*" The Old Testament prophets made careful search and inquiry as they sought to know what time (a better translation than "person") or circumstances the Spirit of Christ was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (1:10-11). Peter is saying, "*The salvation you have received is the very thing that these great men of God spent their lives looking for!*" That doesn't mean that they weren't saved. But they couldn't understand it the way we do because they lived before Christ came.

Some have explained it by saying that the prophets saw two mountain peaks: Mount Calvary, where Christ would die for our sins; and, Mount Olivet, where He will return in power and glory to set up His kingdom. But they couldn't see the valley between the two peaks, much as we can't when we look at two distant peaks. So they didn't grasp that the same Messiah who would suffer for our sins would ascend into heaven for 2,000 years before returning to reign in glory.

READ: Luke 4:18-21, ¹⁸*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;* ¹⁹*To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."* ²⁰*Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.* ²¹*And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* Note how Jesus Himself interpreted the prophet Isaiah when He was preaching in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21): He read a few verses, then stopped in the

middle of the verse and announced, “*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*” Why didn’t Jesus finish the verse from Isaiah? Because it (Isaiah 62) goes on to say, “*And the day of vengeance of our God*” (Isaiah 62:2), which refers to His second coming in judgment. It’s easy to see why the Old Testament prophets missed the 2,000-year gap between the two halves of that verse!

The question arises when we suffer:

- (1) **What if Christianity isn’t really true?**
- (2) **What if I’m believing in myths or something purely psychological?**
- (3) **What if I’m suffering for nothing?**

Peter’s answer is that our salvation is rooted in prophecies made hundreds of years before Christ came. Even though the prophets didn’t understand everything the Holy Spirit (here called the “Spirit of Christ” because He bears witness to Christ) revealed to them, it has been fulfilled in the death, resurrection, ascension, and promised second coming of Christ.

As Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:19, “¹⁹*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;*” “We have the prophetic word made more sure.” Our salvation is great because it is nothing less than that foretold and predicted throughout the Old Testament with 100% accuracy and that is not only a solid confirmation of our salvation and what we believe, it is miraculous in its own right.

2 Important Implications and Applications from this:

- (1) **Read the Old Testament** - So many Christians neglect the Old Testament, complaining that it’s too hard to understand. It is hard to understand in places. Daniel himself had trouble! But it speaks to us of Christ. We will be impoverished if we neglect it. You will find Jesus, and salvation, and truth in the Old Testament. It is every much the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God as the New and should be read, studied, revered as such.
- (2) **Apply yourself diligently to understand the Bible** - I confess that I’ve never sought the Lord with prayer, fasting, sackcloth and ashes, and confession of sin as Daniel did to understand a portion of Scripture! But so often we just give up in frustration rather than applying ourselves to try to understand and obey God’s Word. Peter admits (2 Pet. 3:14-16, “¹⁴*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,*” ¹⁶*as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*”) that some of Paul’s stuff is hard to understand. But God saw fit to put it in Scripture, so we need to seek Him to grow in respect to our salvation.

- 3. **Our salvation is great because it is revealed by God to man** - The prophets weren’t religious geniuses who invented all the things in the Bible. They got their stuff from the

Holy Spirit. Notice Peter's words again in verse 11, "¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Verse 11 establishes the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. As Peter explains (2 Pet. 1:21), "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The apostles didn't cook up their own message, either. Peter tells his readers that those who preached the gospel to them did so "by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12).

What is Inspiration:

1. When people speak of the Bible as inspired, they are referring to the fact that God divinely influenced the human authors of the Scriptures in such a way that what they wrote was the very Word of God -
2. In the context of the Scriptures, the word "inspiration" simply means "God-breathed" - Inspiration means the Bible truly is the Word of God and makes the Bible unique among all other books.
3. The Bible itself claim to be the inspired word of God - While there are different views as to the extent to which the Bible is inspired, there can be no doubt that the Bible itself claims that every word in every part of the Bible comes from God. Listen to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, "¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. ¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." And of course the verse we are all familiar with on the inspiration of Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." This view of the Scriptures is often referred to as "verbal plenary inspiration." That means the inspiration extends to the very words themselves (verbal)—not just concepts or ideas—and that the inspiration extends to all parts of Scripture and all subject matters of Scripture (plenary). Some people believe only parts of the Bible are inspired or only the thoughts or concepts that deal with religion are inspired, but these views of inspiration fall short of the Bible's claims about itself. Full verbal plenary inspiration is an essential characteristic of the Word of God.
4. The extent of inspiration can be clearly seen in the claims of 2 Timothy 3:16 - "¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." This verse tells us that God inspired all Scripture and that it is all profitable to us. It is not just the parts of the Bible that deal with religious doctrines that are inspired, but each and every word from Genesis to Revelation. Because it is inspired by God, the Scriptures are therefore authoritative when it comes to establishing doctrine, and sufficient for teaching man how be in a right relationship with God. The Bible claims not only to be inspired by God, but also to have the supernatural ability to change us and make us "complete." What more can we need? We do not need a "Pope" to tell us what or how to believe (Catholic). We do not need "tradition" to tell us how to believe

(Catholic/Protestant). We do not need “experience” or “emotion” to tell us how to believe (Charismatic). Our sole and final source of authority is the Bible... Scripture... “sola scriptura.” The phrase *sola scriptura* is from the Latin: *sola* having the idea of “alone,” “ground,” “base,” and the word *scriptura* meaning “writings”—referring to the Scriptures. ***Sola scriptura means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian.*** The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

5. **The source of the inspiration of Scripture is God alone, not the prophets, nor kings, nor priest, nor disciple, nor apostles, nor any man.** - Another verse that deals with the inspiration of the Scriptures is 2 Peter 1:21, “*For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*” Scripture comes from God. It is “God’s Word” to us spoken through men perhaps, but man is not its source. This verse helps us to understand that even though God used men with their distinctive personalities and writing styles, God divinely inspired the very words they wrote. Jesus Himself confirmed the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures when He said, “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law...*” (Matthew 5:17-18). In these verses, Jesus is reinforcing the accuracy of the Scriptures down to the smallest detail and the slightest punctuation mark, because it is the very Word of God.

Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, we can conclude that they are also inerrant and authoritative. A correct view of God will lead us to a correct view of His Word. Because God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and completely perfect, His Word will by its very nature have the same characteristics. The same verses that establish the inspiration of the Scriptures also establish that it is both inerrant and authoritative. Without a doubt the Bible is what it claims to be—the undeniable, authoritative, Word of God to humanity.

When we talk about the inspiration of the Bible, we mean that “*God superintended the human authors of Scripture so that using their own personalities they composed and recorded without error His message*” (Charles Ryrie, Study Graph, “Bible Doctrine I” [Moody Bible Institute]). As Charles Hodge put it (*Systematic Theology* [Eerdmans], 1:154), “*Inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will. They were in such a sense the organs of God that what they said, God said.*” A critic may argue that we’re reasoning in a circle: We say that the Bible is inspired because the Bible says it’s inspired. Any book can make that claim for itself. But if you read the Bible, you discover that it is a self-authenticating book. Though written by many different authors over thousands of years, there is a unity and integrity to the Bible that could not exist apart from supernatural influence. Furthermore, if you reject the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, you must reject the teachings of Jesus Himself, because He repeatedly taught that Scripture is from God (Matt. 5:17-18; 22:31-

32, 43; John 10:35). Thus our salvation is great because it is the message of God's grace; it was predicted by the Old Testament prophets; it is revealed by God to man.

4. **Our salvation is great because it is a mystery to the angels** - Peter says that even the angels long to look into our salvation! The word “look” means to stoop to look into (it was used of Peter stooping to look into the empty tomb--John 20:5) or to gaze intently at something (James 1:25). It implies intense interest. When Satan and the other fallen angels sinned, God did not provide salvation for them. He provided it only for fallen human beings, and that at great cost: He took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and died in our place on the cross. His plan is that His manifold wisdom might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10). Jesus taught that the angels rejoice over the salvation of one repentant sinner (Luke 15:10). Whatever angels know, we can assume that they know a lot about God. They stand in His holy presence (Isa. 6:1-3). They are sent out to do His will (Heb. 1:14). They have tremendous authority and power (2 Pet. 2:11; Jude 8-9). They're impressive beings! And yet, there is something about the majesty of God's Being that He is teaching even the angels through our salvation! How privileged we are to enjoy such a great salvation!
5. **Our salvation is great because it involves the sufferings and glories of Christ** - Jesus Christ is the center of world history. His coming to this earth, His dying for our sins, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and His promise to return bodily, are the most important facts in human history. Nothing else comes close by way of comparison. He is the center of all Scripture. As the risen Savior spoke to the men on the Emmaus road, “*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:25-27). Christ is at the center both of human history and of Scripture. And the cross is the central reason Christ came to this earth. Thus, as Alexander Maclaren declares (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], 1 Peter, p. 47), it is not enough to preach Christ; we must preach Christ crucified. It is not enough to preach the ethical teachings of Jesus, although we must seek to live by them. It is not enough to point to Jesus as our great example, although His life should be our model. It is not even enough to speak of His death as a brave sacrifice, unless we make it clear that He “died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Tim. 1:15). He accomplished that salvation through His death on the cross. When Paul reasoned from the Scriptures with the Jews in Thessalonica, he explained and gave evidence “*that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead,*” saying, “*This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ*” (Acts 17:3). The sufferings of Christ refer to His death that satisfied the justice of God as payment for our sins. The glories of Christ refer to His resurrection, His ascension, His present exalted place at the right hand of the Father, His bodily return, and His future reign in power and glory. Our salvation is great because it is centered on these, the most crucial truths in history.

THE GREATNESS OF OUR SALVATION AND FUTURE GLORY THAT HELPS US TO JOYFULLY ENDURE PRESENT SUFFERING

We should joyfully endure present suffering in light of future glory. This point stems from the context of our text.

4 Key Thoughts from Peter on Our Present Suffering and Future Glory:

1. Peter is arguing that our salvation is so great that whatever we must endure for Christ's sake now is nothing compared with the glory that awaits us.
2. Just as Jesus first wore the crown of thorns and then the crown of glory, so with us who follow Him.
3. We may suffer now, but we already have tasted of this great salvation that the prophets foretold and into which the angels long to look.
4. We can't even fathom all the riches which God has in store for those who love Him.

So when you suffer for Jesus' sake, hang in there with joy, knowing that glory lies ahead!

CONCLUSION

When you study your Bible, one secret is to look for words that are repeated for emphasis. Sometimes these words are not significant in themselves, but their repetition makes them significant. In our text, there is a word that occurs once in 1 Peter 1:10 and three times in verse 12 that drives home Peter's message: the word "you." He writes of "*the grace that would come to you*" (1:10); "*they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven*" (1:12). The point is simple: Even though the message of God's salvation is the greatest message in human history, it does you no good unless *you* personally lay hold of it by faith.

I began this message by asking, "What consistently gives you the most joy in life?" The Reformed Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 begins with a similar question: What is your only comfort in life and death? It's a personal question with both temporal and eternal implications. If your honest answer is anything other than, "Jesus Christ and the salvation He has given to me by faith," you need to do some serious soul-searching. You may be a church member or even involved in Christian ministry, but if you've never responded personally to the great salvation God provided in Jesus Christ, you are lost. I fear that as in Jesus' day, so today it is often the most outwardly religious who have the most difficulty responding to the salvation Christ provides because it requires admitting that we are not good people; we're undeserving sinners.

Years ago, Bishop John Taylor Smith, a former chaplain general of the British army, was preaching in a large cathedral on the text, "You must be born again." He said, "My dear people, do not substitute anything for the new birth. You may be a member of a church, ... but church membership is not new birth, and our text says, 'You must be born again.' The rector was sitting on his left. He continued, "You may be a clergyman like my friend the rector here and not be born again, and you must be born again." On his right sat the archdeacon. Pointing at him, he continued, "You might even be an archdeacon like my friend here and still not be born again, but you must be born again. You might even be a bishop like myself and not be born again, but you must be born again." He finished his message and went his way. But several days later he received a letter from the archdeacon which read, in part, "My dear Bishop: You have found me out. I have been a clergyman for over 30 years, but I have never known anything of the joy that Christians speak of. I could never understand it. But when you pointed at me and said that a person could be an archdeacon and not be born again, I understood what the trouble was. Would

you please come and talk with me?" Of course, Bishop Smith did talk with him and the archdeacon responded to Christ's call to salvation (H. A. Ironside, *Illustrations of Biblical Truth* [Moody Press], pp. 49-50).

If you do not know today the great joy of salvation, perhaps it is because you have never personally responded to Jesus Christ. Why not do so right now? Then you will know what's so great about salvation!