

**“What a Privilege!”**  
**1 Peter 1:10-12**  
**October 3, 2010**  
**Faith Community Church**

I don't exactly remember the year—it was either 1977 or 78 or 79. I was about 11 or 12 or 13 years old. Jimmy Carter came to our town. Apparently, he was friends with a family who lived just a couple blocks away from where we lived. He was president at the time, and it was a big to-do. All the Chicago TV news stations came out, with their cameras and big lights. There was of course Secret Service protection. The street was blocked off to traffic, and there was a cordon around the house where President Carter was visiting. And as I'm sure is the case anywhere a sitting president travels, the locals turned out in crowds to see the spectacle. I remember walking over there and trying to squeeze into the crowd, trying to get a glimpse of the President. Everyone in the crowd was rubbernecking, up on tiptoes, trying to see what was going on. I remember that I did catch a brief glimpse of President Carter, as he got out of his limousine and walked up towards the house waving. Or at least I caught a reflection off his teeth. The people who had got there first and were right behind the police tape got the best look, but even that was a fleeting glance. And even they didn't get to see and hear what went on once the President went inside his friends' house for coffee or whatever it was they were doing. The crowds and reporters still hung around outside, as if by being that close, they could somehow see through the walls to find out what was going on. But only his friends and his aides got to see that secret part of his visit. Only his friends and aides were privileged to see and hear the president up close.

I'm sure we've all had a similar experience, of being on the outside, trying to get a glimpse at what's going on, either with some celebrity, or some cool party, or some fantastic event. You crane your neck to see or strain your ears to hear, but you're not one of the privileged ones who's in on the action. And you wish you could be, because it's cool, and it would be great to tell your friends and family about.

I have news for you this morning. You are privileged. You are one of the insiders to the greatest spectacle, the most important event, the biggest news story, ever known to man. What am I talking about? I am talking about God's gospel message of salvation. If I can press my analogy this morning, you and I are the ones inside the Secret Service cordon, we are the ones inside the house, we are the ones who don't have to peer around people and get up on our tiptoes to see and hear what's going on. You and I are privileged. And we are even more privileged than some people that we might think of as being especially privileged. Two weeks ago, we began our series in 1 Peter, talking about the fact that Christians are strangers in the world, but are God's elect. Peter brought this to his readers' attention in order to encourage them, and to help them not be surprised at the suffering they were enduring for the cause of Christ. Even though Christians are strangers in the world, we are also the ultimate insiders to God's plan of salvation. And in today's passage, Peter makes this point, showing us how very privileged we are. Let's read our passage for today. It's 1 Peter 1:10-12. **[READ]**

In verses 3-9, Peter has been praising God, as he describes the living hope to which his readers have been called, their inheritance, their salvation. He ends verse 9, “**obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**” He picks up this thought in verse 10: “**As to this salvation...**” This salvation is the topic of this paragraph. Today, we'll make four further observations about this salvation. First, Peter turns his attention to what has come before in

salvation history. Here's our first point: **This salvation was foretold and searched out by the prophets.** When you read the Old Testament, do you ever think it would have been kind of cool to be one of the people we read about there? Abraham? Moses? Or Joshua? One of the judges? David? Elijah? Isaiah? To see the manifest power of God right before your eyes the way they did? To literally hear God's voice speaking to you out of the bush or the cloud or from what theologians call a theophany—a face to face encounter with a manifestation of God's glory? It would be cool, I think. Although the biblical evidence suggests it would also be much, much scarier than we imagine. These people were privileged to have God interact with them in such a direct way. But as privileged as they were, they didn't have the whole story about what God was ultimately doing and going to do. They were the ones on the outside of the crowd, getting up on tiptoes, trying to see the big show. As privileged as the prophets were, you and I are more privileged. And this is the point Peter makes here. He says that the prophets prophesied of the grace that would come to us. So, they caught a glimpse. They had an idea. They saw something, but they saw it through a fog. Not that they didn't want to see it. Peter goes on to say that they “**made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know**” more about what God spoke through them. They wanted to know “**what person or time**” the Holy Spirit was indicating. Or, as NIV reads, “**the time and circumstances,**” of the Messiah. Surely the prophets' interest was piqued by the revelations they received from God, and they wondered when and how they would come about. We actually see this in a couple places, for instance at the end of the Book of Daniel and also in Habakkuk.

While we're on the subject of the prophets, Peter goes on in verse 12 to say more about them. He writes, “**It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you...**” This is not to say that the prophets didn't have an important and powerful ministry in their own day. But as their oracles and prophecies were written down and made part of Scripture, their ultimate purpose was pointing to Christ. Ultimately, their ministry is to those of us who live in the age after Christ has come. We have the benefit of hindsight to see that the writings of the Old Testament point to Jesus. In Luke 24, after his resurrection, Jesus encountered the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In verse 27, it says this:

**<sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

I'm going to pull this all together at the end, but for now let's move on to our second observation. **This salvation has been preached by the Apostles and all who follow them.** Here I'm looking at verse 12 again. The prophets realized they weren't serving themselves, but “you”, Peter has said, and now he goes on: “**in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you.**” If you remember from the introduction to 1 Peter two weeks ago, we aren't sure how these people in Asia Minor heard the gospel. It might have been Peter or one of the other apostles. Whoever told them, even if it wasn't directly from an apostle, the trail leads straight back to the apostles. What the prophets had foretold with only partial understanding, the Apostles have now proclaimed clearly through the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is continuity. Thus Paul is able to say in Ephesians that our faith is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Peter emphasizes this unity further by the fact that he makes reference to the Holy Spirit having been involved in the message in both instances. In verse 11, “**the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating**” and predicting about the Messiah to come. And in verse 12, those who preached the gospel did so “**by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.**” The Holy Spirit points to Christ. He did so as he inspired the writings of the Old Testament. He did so as he inspired the writings of the New Testament. And he does so as his

people today faithfully pass on the apostolic gospel message to others who need to hear. As believers, we begin to see what a legacy we inherit as we see that the gospel message of salvation we have believed has been superintended by the Holy Spirit, predicted by the prophets, proclaimed by the apostles, and carried to us by a friend or family member or pastor.

Third, **This salvation is a wonder to the angels.** I take this from the very end of verse 12, where Peter calls these things that have been announced through the Spirit by both the prophets and apostles, **“things into which angels long to look.”** Now again, maybe it’s just me, but has your imagination ever gone wandering, and thought about how cool it would be to be an angel? To not have disobeyed God and not have to deal with sin? To be in his presence serving and worshipping him? To be able to fly? I think that would be cool. And again, it would probably be a more overwhelming existence than we imagine, since the Bible tells us that the angels in God’s presence cover their eyes before him. Anyway, as good as it might be to be an angel, it is better to be a human who’s a recipient of God’s grace and salvation. After all, angels were not the pinnacle of God’s creation, man was. And Peter says that angels can only desire to look into this grace which has come to us. The word “look” implies a reaching or bending over to look into something, like trying to peer over a wall or look down into a well. The angels aren’t the insiders; they’re trying to get a look. Instead, we’re the insiders, the ones getting the full experience. Now, we might ask why is this such a wonder to the angels? Probably several reasons, but I think Peter hints at one here in this paragraph. It’s the same reason salvation ought to be a wonder to all who are exposed to it. And it leads to our final observation.

**This salvation was achieved through Christ’s sufferings and results in glories to come.** Here I’m going back to the end of verse 11. Peter’s talking about the prophets, and then about the Holy Spirit, **“as he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”** I think at least in part, this is what causes the angels wonder: that God the Son, eternally begotten of the Father, whom the angels have worshiped, number one, took on flesh and became a man. Christmas is coming up in a few months. We’re all familiar with the Christmas story. I think we often imagine Gabriel coming to Mary and telling her about the son she would bear in a very matter-of-fact manner. Or the angels announcing to the shepherds about Jesus’ birth in a low-key way. I don’t think that was the case. I think the angels themselves were probably quite stunned at the news they were given to deliver. The Incarnation is remarkable enough in itself. But then number two that as a man, he suffered and died to save sinful human beings, which is Peter’s point here.

By the way, two weeks ago I mentioned a turnaround for Peter in identifying Gentile Christians with God’s people. Here’s another remarkable turnaround for Peter. When Jesus told his disciples that he must suffer and die, Peter rebuked him for it. He couldn’t imagine it. But now Peter understands that’s why Jesus came, and that in suffering, he has purchased salvation. Having seen Jesus suffer and die, and having seen him resurrected, Peter now understands the predictions of the prophets that pointed to the Messiah’s suffering. Prophecies like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 and others. And he also understands that this suffering of Jesus led not to shame and disgrace as Peter imagined, but rather to glory. The glory of what we just celebrated in the Lord’s Supper, that Jesus died to bring salvation. Earlier I quoted from Luke and the story of the Emmaus Road. After the two disciples told this supposed stranger about the happenings in Jerusalem, Jesus responded this way:

**<sup>25</sup>And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”**

Indeed, Jesus has received glory, and he does and will continue to receive glories upon glories. And when verse 11 says “and the glories to follow,” it is probably speaking about glories to Christ, yet we know also from last week and other places in the Bible that his followers will share in his glory.

Let’s tie this point about suffering to the rest of the passage, as well as to Peter’s larger context. Remember, Peter’s topic in this paragraph is “**this salvation**.” This salvation was achieved by Christ’s sufferings. Furthermore, these sufferings (and the glories to follow) were predicted by the Holy Spirit through the message of the prophets. Jesus’ sufferings were not an accident or a tragic mistake. They were part of God’s plan from the beginning, and they were necessary to salvation and to the glory that would follow. And these sufferings are a necessary part of the gospel message proclaimed by the apostles and by the church down through the ages. What’s the point? Suffering is hard to accept. We shy away from it. I’m sure the Old Testament prophets didn’t fully understand why the Messiah they spoke of had to suffer. We know that the concept of a suffering Messiah was foreign to the people of Jesus’ day and their expectations. We know that Jesus’ suffering to save others is even an offensive concept to many today. The point is this: Peter is telling his readers that this new identity they have as both strangers and God’s elect, and the living hope, the inheritance, the salvation, the grace that they enjoy—all this came about because of Jesus’ sufferings, and are part of the glories that are being and are yet to be revealed. He is also laying the foundation for understanding the suffering that they themselves are going through. Jesus suffered so he might receive glory. We will also suffer that we might receive glory. Peter gets to this in chapter 4, verses 12-13:

**<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup>but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.**

Edmund Clowney writes,

**The pattern of sufferings and glory has profound meaning for the church.... Our suffering is not a sign that Christ has betrayed us, or that he is no longer Lord; rather it is a sign of our fellowship with the risen Lord who first suffered for us. Suffering, indeed, becomes a sign of the glory that is to follow.**

I’ve made four observations about salvation, which is the topic of Peter’s paragraph here. It was foretold and searched out by the prophets. It has been preached by the apostles and those who follow them. It is a wonder to the angels. It was achieved by Christ’s sufferings and results in glories to come. Keeping in mind what Peter has written in the previous verses, how do we tie all this together? Here’s the lesson of this passage, set in its context: **Though we suffer because of Christ, we are highly privileged as recipients of and believers in God’s message of salvation.** We’re more privileged than the prophets, because they only saw it dimly; we’re more privileged than the angels, because they don’t experience salvation, whereas we do. Jesus himself indicated the privilege of living in this age (Luke 10:23-24):

**<sup>23</sup>Turning to the disciples, He said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, <sup>24</sup>for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.”**

And then in Matthew 11:11:

<sup>11</sup> “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

**Though we suffer because of Christ, we are highly privileged as recipients of and believers in God’s message of salvation.**

This passage is a little hard to apply. But let’s try anyway, based on what we’ve said so far. First, the privilege we enjoy. It’s a fact. As Christians, let’s act on this tremendous privilege. I didn’t say act privileged, like snotty kids of wealthy parents who are proud and look down on everyone else. But recognize the privileged status we’ve been given, and respond appropriately. A couple ideas come to mind. The first is no surprise, as I talked about last week: worship and gratitude to God. The second is to treat this as the privilege it is, rather than as something that’s mundane or of little interest. Some of you may have read this week about the results of a recent Pew Research study regarding Americans’ knowledge about religion. Here’s the first line summary in the AP story: [A new survey of Americans’ knowledge of religion found that atheists, agnostics, Jews and Mormons outperformed Protestants and Roman Catholics in answering questions about major religions, while many respondents could not correctly give the most basic tenets of their own faiths.](#)

Now, I’ve learned to take research results like this with a grain of salt. Without diving into an analysis of the data, which aren’t readily available anyway, we don’t know how they classified respondents, nor exactly what questions they asked, or how they asked them. And we all know it’s easy to lie with statistics, or at least to present a “truth” that suits your agenda. But that said, I think we all know the general shallowness and even biblical illiteracy that characterizes much of the church today. This despite the fact that we live in the most-resourced generation in the history of the church. My point is this: The prophets made careful searches; the angels long to look into these things; atheists and agnostics can sometimes run circles around us with their knowledge of our faith. We ought to be experts at the faith we profess. And it doesn’t take a seminary degree. Many men and women whom the world regarded as “simple” have been geniuses in the faith. We should know this book—both Old and New Testaments, since as we’ve seen today, both teach us about Christ. We should understand what it says and how it fits together. We should live out the truths it teaches. Are our minds and our hearts occupied with this great salvation? May it be so.

Next, I think we can again take encouragement of our status as God’s elect and the living hope we possess in spite of and even because of the sufferings that we endure for the sake of Christ. I’ve hit this the last two weeks, and I’ll hit it again, so I won’t go beyond just reminding us of it today.

And the last application I think we can take from this passage is to follow the example of the prophets and the apostles as carriers of this gospel message of salvation. Christ suffered to bring about salvation. There is no other way. This is a message that people need to hear, whether they realize it or not, whether they want to or not. Let us be faithful heralds of this message.