

True Grace that is Yours

1 Peter 1:10-12

Series: *True Grace - 1 Peter*

Introduction: Take your Bible and join me in 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter chapter 1.

Charles Wesley was known to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lowest of the low – the outcasts of society. He was preaching in July of 1738 at the infamous London prison – Newgate. It was a notoriously cruel and harsh penitentiary where men, and especially slaves, were condemned to death for the most minor of offenses. Hangings became town spectacles like they were some kind of sporting event for the townspeople. As Wesley preached at this prison he took a special interest in a poor African slave who was condemned to hang for stealing from his master. Charles explained the Gospel to him and he listened in astonishment as Wesley explained that Christ came from heaven to die an agonizing death in order to save him from his sin. As tears streamed down the slave's cheeks he cried – “What! Was it for me? Did God suffer all this for so poor a creature as me?” He soon found salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. The next week the day of execution came. Charles prayed and sang hymns with the men as they were loaded onto a cart, their hands tied behind their backs. Charles wrote later in his journal and said that these men “were all cheerful; full of comfort, peace, and triumph; assuredly persuaded Christ had died for them, and waited to receive them into paradise.” As Charles himself reflected on that day he said “that hour under the gallows was the most blessed hour in my life.”¹

It is only Christ who can give us any hope, joy, or eternal comfort in the face of the harshest of realities in this life. The joy of salvation runs higher and broader and deeper and wider than any sorrow or suffering we will ever be asked to face. Can you imagine standing in the shadows of the gallows upon which men you know and love are now swinging, breathless and lifeless – and being able to say – that was the most blessed hour of my life? The only path to that kind of response in the face of such tragedy is the path which takes us ever deeper into the treasury of the Gospel of our salvation. This is what Peter does in the 3 verses we will consider this morning. He picks up the theme of the last phrase of verse 9 in chapter 1 and he explains more fully the greatness of the grace which has brought us the salvation of our souls. *Read 1:10-12.*

These verses form the last of one long Greek sentence that started way back in verse 3. The whole point of the sentence from verse 3-12 is to bless God for all that He has accomplished in

¹ Ron Prosis, *Preaching Illustrations from Church History*, pg. 176.

bringing salvation to us. He should be blessed because he has caused us to be born again to a living hope and a sure inheritance by his great mercy. He should be blessed because He is keeping us guarded by his great grace until the salvation we have been born again to is come in its fullness. God should be blessed because He has given us a genuine faith that is tested by the fire of trials and becomes all the more glorifying to our Lord on the day of his appearance. He should be blessed because this salvation has placed within us an unconquerable joy. And now, in these three verses, we see that we should bless God for this great salvation brought to us by true grace! This true grace that was promised and then delivered is now a true grace that is ours in Christ Jesus. Notice that though we will encounter many commands in this short letter, we are first confronted with the deep truths about our salvation. All the commands to follow will be built upon this doxological foundation – this “glory be to God” foundation. In other words, all our duty in the Christian life flows out of the fountain of our worship – our adoration – our love for – our desire to bless – the great God of our salvation.

So, what do we learn in these 3 verses about our salvation, and therefore about the God of our salvation? Well, we learn that this true grace came in two movements – it was a grace promised and then a grace delivered.

I. **Grace Promised – vs. 10-11**

- a. The true grace promised is explained in verses 10-11. The prophets spoken of here are the OT prophets who were carried along by the Holy Spirit to write the very words of God. It was the Spirit of Christ in them who was predicting these things, and it was this work of the Spirit which produced a fervent pursuit in the prophets to know the person and the time of these predictions.
- b. *Prophecy Produced Pursuit*
 - i. So, prophecy produced pursuit. Because they received the Word of the Lord through the ministry of the Holy Spirit they set themselves wholeheartedly after the pursuit of more truth. There are three different words used for searching or inquiring at the end of verse 10 and the beginning of verse 11. These words combine to give the force of a diligent search for something they deemed to be of great value. These words are used in other parts of the Scripture to describe someone seeking for God or for seeking the Scriptures themselves. So, these men were given prophecy from the Spirit and His work in them compelled them to seek more. And how couldn't it really. God spoke to them and spoke through them, and they had no doubt that it was God. And they could nothing other than prophesy what God had said. Listen to the prophet Amos:
 1. For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?

- ii. How could they do anything else? But they were not uninterested conduits of truth like the pipes which carry your water into your house. Rather, their hearts were lit aflame by the truth they were given. As the prophecy of God was given over thousands of years, and as it funneled from broad and general to much more specific – these latter prophets were especially interested to seek out if the person who would be the Messiah would come during their time. So the text in 1 Peter says that they searched diligently inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ was indicating the Messiah would come.
- iii. So, these prophecies started in the first few chapters of God’s revelation – in fact, just minutes after the sin of man in the Garden, God announced the first hint of this salvation He was going to bring. So, in the curse of the Serpent after his deception of Eve in the Garden, God said that the serpent would crush the heel of the seed of the woman, but that seed would crush the head of the serpent. This was the first promise of a Savior – and this grace of God would come through the seed of the woman. Later in Genesis this promise funnels into more specificity when we are told that through Abraham’s seed all of the peoples of the world would be blessed. Then we are told at the end of Genesis that this Messiah will come through the line of Judah, one of Jacob’s sons, the grandson of Abraham. Then in 2 Samuel we are told that this Messiah will be in the lineage of David and will one day eternally sit on his throne as the ruler of Israel. Then in Isaiah we find out that he will be born of a virgin, and in Micah we learn that he will be born of the clan of Ephrathah in the town of Bethlehem.
- iv. So, imagine yourself to be Isaiah or Micah. Having received such specific prophecy you would be compelled to look into this – to search and inquire to see if you could find this Messiah in your time. In other words – the point here – is that they believed God, and because they believed God they longed for God’s word of prophecy to come true because it was a word that was full of good news and grace. It was a word about the full and final salvation of God’s people – and the prophets wanted to know this grace. But alas, as verse 12 says, they were told that these things were not going to come in their time. These words of prophecy were not to serve them, in the sense that they would not see the day of their fulfillment. But these words of prophecy were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and now the believers to whom Peter is writing, and us – we now have the key to unlock the great treasure troves of OT prophecy. They are not just promises waiting to be fulfilled but promises which have been kept in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth.

v. And so, we hold a privileged position over even the prophets of the Old Testament. And in this privileged position of being the recipients of the grace that was promised over thousands of years of OT history – Peter is trying to get us to turn our eyes to these OT texts. He is teaching us the importance of the Scriptures – all of them. Just think about Peter and his life experiences. He had a front row seat to the sufferings of the one and only Messiah. He had a front row seat to the subsequent glories of Jesus' resurrection and ascension. But he points us back further than that here. He roots the rest of his letter in the soil of the Old Testament text. He wants us to know that this plan of God – the true grace that was promised – is a plan which goes back much farther than him. This is not a new thing which has been only recently invented by a bunch of men in an upper room after their leader left them. No, this is a work of the Holy Spirit which has been brewing and developing over centuries of time – all in accord with the clear promises of God.

c. *Prophecy Predicted the Passion*

- i. These prophecies fueled the prophets fervent search for who would fulfill them and for when it would all come to pass. These prophecies also predicted the passion of the Messiah. And by Passion I mean what the text says here – the sufferings and the subsequent glories. Notice that they are both plural – sufferings and glories – and indeed they were many – both in prophecy and in reality.
- ii. The Old Testament is full of both clear prophetic words about the suffering Messiah, and with foreshadowing glimpses of the suffering Messiah. So, for instance, Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 are the clearest OT prophecies which detail the affliction which would come upon the Messiah as the Suffering Servant. And then there are the foreshadowing pictures of the suffering Messiah – things like the sacrificial system of the Temple, and in particular the spotless lamb which was offered as a sacrifice for sin. Or the Lamb that was slain on the night of the Passover in the place of the firstborn in each house. Or the ram that was provided to take the place of Isaac. Or the animals that God himself killed in order to provide clothes for Adam and Eve after their sin in the Garden. All of these, and hundreds more, point ahead to the Messiah, the Savior, who would suffer on behalf of His people.
- iii. The Old Testament is also full of prophecies about the subsequent glories of the Messiah. This promised One would suffer, but then His suffering and humiliation would give way to great glorification. So texts like Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 and Isaiah 9 and 40 and 61 and Daniel 7 and Malachi 3, and so many more – they all prophesy clearly of the coming rule and reign and glory of the Messiah. These glories are also foreshadowed throughout

the Old Testament in the lives of people like Moses and Joseph and David and Solomon. All of the Old Testament is either setting the stage for the Messiah to come or is directly predicting or foreshadowing His coming to suffer and then to be glorified. And remember – all of this is the grace that was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets but was then to be yours. This grace is not a commodity to be bought and sold and shifted around to serve our varying needs. No, this grace is a person who was prophesied to suffer and to be glorified. And this grace's name is Jesus the Christ.

- iv. Take note of the fact that it is the Spirit of Christ who was at work in these Old Testament prophets to predict the sufferings and the subsequent glories. This Spirit of Christ is the same as the Holy Spirit of God, but this designation in this text is to make the point of continuity. The Christ who was coming is the Christ who was prophesying of his coming. The Christ did not start to exist at the moment of his conception in the Virgin Mary. No, the Christ pre-existed that moment and was at work through the Spirit of God to speak through the prophets about his own coming. Edmund Clowney says it this way:
 1. “Jesus is therefore not simply the one of whom the prophets speak; he is the one who speaks through the prophets . . . Not only does prophecy bear witness to Jesus, but Jesus bears witness through prophecy. The incarnate Lord is the true witness; the eternal Logos is the source of the prophetic testimony.”²
- v. So Christ is at work long before ever taking upon himself human flesh to prophesy in centuries gone by about his entrance into the world. And so, it is reasonable for us to think that when Jesus speaks hundreds of years before something happens about his own coming, then that thing can expect to be fulfilled just as Jesus said it would be. So, when we are told that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, we expect that this will be fulfilled as actually as that. What Christ has said we expect for that to come true as He said it. And indeed – it has!
- vi. And this does not just apply to the sufferings of Christ, which were fulfilled as literally as they could be, so too we apply this expectation of real fulfillment to his subsequent glories. Those glories have been partially seen in that Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended into Heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father. But there is more to come! There is yet the future return of this Christ who will show and receive even more glory as the Bridegroom of the Church, as the Messiah King who conquers all evil, as the Judge of all Nations, as the Worthy Lamb who alone is able to open the seals of judgment during the Tribulation, and as the King who

² Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, TBST, pg. 58.

will sit on the Davidic Throne throughout His 1000 year reign. Just like we expected the prophecies about his coming and his suffering to be fulfilled literally, so too we expect these prophecies to be fulfilled literally and really and actually. As surely as He suffered, we can be just as assured of the fullness of the glories to come!

- vii. This is one of the most complex paradoxes of the Scriptures by the way – the fact that the Messiah would suffer and have glory. They don't seem to go together, but they are both so very obviously prophesied in the Old Testament and then shown to be true in the New Testament. The rabbis of the Jewish religion – the experts in the Old Testament were so perplexed by this paradox that they were convinced there were two Messiahs who would come. One would come as the Son of Joseph who would fulfill the passages prophesying his suffering and death, and then another Messiah would come and he would be the son of David and would fulfill the prophecies about the ruling and reigning of the Messiah. But here Peter is clearly saying that the paradox is not fulfilled in two Messiah's but in one. Only one will be the Shepherd who is struck down for his sheep. Only one Messiah will be cursed for them. Only one Messiah will suffer under the condemnation of their sin and be bruised in their place. And this one Messiah, after suffering and dying will be raised to the subsequent glories which follow that suffering, namely, the resurrection, ascension, and seating at the right hand of God, and all the future glories to be displayed at His Second Coming. There are not two Messiahs, but one Messiah who indeed comes twice – once to suffer and once to display the subsequent glories. This is the grace that was promised through the Old Testament prophets and has now been delivered to us through Christ.

II. Grace Delivered – vs. 12

- a. This is the clear message of verse 12. The true grace which was promised to mankind, is now the true grace which has been delivered. This Messiah has indeed come and the message of His glorious gospel has now been brought to the churches Peter was writing, as well as to our own ears. Grace promised is now grace delivered.
- b. *By Prophets*
 - i. This delivery was by prophets, as we have already seen. But verse 12 lets us know that while they were searching diligently for the fulfillment of these promises it was revealed to them that these promises were not going to be fulfilled in their lifetime. Rather, they would fill the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 and it is truly said of all of them that “these all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and

greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” (Heb. 11:13)

- ii. Not only did they acknowledge that they were strangers and exiles and those who would not know the fullness of the promises they had been given in this life, they also were those who served us – the recipients of those fulfilled promises. So Hebrews 11 closes this way – “And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” In other words, it is not enough that those promises made to them through prophecy be fulfilled in some future time, but those prophecies carried with them an innumerable throng of believers in Jesus the Christ who have been served by these men of faith who have gone before. They served us by giving us the prophetic word. So now, we can look at the life of Jesus of Nazareth and we can know that He is the Messiah because there is no part of his life which is out of line with the prophecies which were made. He perfectly fits them all.

c. *By Preachers*

- i. This true grace was also delivered by preachers, Peter says in verse 12. These truths about the Messiah’s sufferings and subsequent glories have not been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. The Spirit of Christ who was at work to predict the Messiah’s coming in the Old Testament is the same Spirit who has been sent from Heaven after the Ascension of Jesus to fill the preachers of this good news. This is speaking specifically of the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit came in great power upon the disciples of Jesus and they proclaimed the Gospel in many different languages to the diverse crowd of Jews. The core of their message was that this Jesus whom they had recently crucified is indeed the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, and this is proven by His resurrection. From that day on the Holy Spirit carried men along in the work of the proclamation of the Gospel to the farthest regions of the earth. And now, some 30 years later, Peter is writing from Rome to a group of churches in Asia Minor and here he encourages them with the reality that they too have received the grace which was promised and which has now been delivered through preachers of this good news.

d. *For God’s Glory*

- i. And all of this is for God’s glory. The grace promised by prophets of old is the grace delivered by preachers of the present, and this glorifies God. It glorifies God because it is all an act of the ministry of His Spirit. The Spirit of God is administering this whole process, from beginning to end.

This means that the message of the Old Testament is the same as the message of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament. This is the hermeneutical principle which is going to guide Peter throughout his letter. He is going to quote and reference the Old Testament at almost every turn as he applies texts to the lives of these believers. The Old Testament matters in the life of the believer, as Peter will display. And this is true because the Old Testament lays the foundation for the New Testament. And this brings great glory to God! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He has always had one plan of salvation – one Messiah who would bring true grace for His Chosen People, the Jews, and for an innumerable crowd of Gentiles who are grafted into His people by His unmerited favor. The God of the Old Testament is the same God of love and grace and salvation as the God of the New Testament. And nowhere is the more clearly seen than in the prophecies given about and fulfilled in the Messiah.

- ii. God's glory is also seen in this text in that this true grace which is now ours is something into which angels long to look. This is one of the most interesting phrases in the whole book. There is not much explanation here, but simply the statement that the angels of Heaven have a constant yearning deep within themselves – which is what the word “long” means – that they are constantly trying to figure these things out. This plan of redemption for those who would believe in Jesus Christ is something which angels do not get to experience. Redemption is not for them. They were made perfect, some of them fell with Lucifer, and the rest were sealed in their perfection and sinlessness. So, as they watch from afar the unfolding of the plan of salvation under the direction of the Spirit of God – they are constantly amazed! Like the prophets of old, they believe God to be a God of His Word, and so they are watching Him unfold the keeping of that Word in the course of human history – and, though Peter doesn't say this – I think this compels them to worship Him all the more!
- iii. The point Peter is making to these believers in Asia Minor is that, even though you are suffering to follow Christ, you are standing in the true grace of God which puts you in a better position than what the Old Testament prophets knew, and better than what the angels of Heaven have experienced. So in this way, you are better off than they are! As New Covenant believers we are privileged in a way that is better than prophets of old and angels in heaven.

Conclusion: This indeed is a privileged position which brings with it some clear responsibilities. These are the responsibilities that Peter launches into in the very next section where he will tell us to be holy as God is holy and to set our hope fully on the grace that is to come. Having

received such grace, we must bless God by walking in this grace. So, as we close let me point you to two ways from these three verses we can bless God as recipients of the great grace in Christ. Therefore, Bless God by –

- Seeking Christ in Scripture
 - The first is simply to seek Christ in Scripture. This blesses the God of our salvation in that it shows our belief in His work of revelation. The Old Testament prophets were given snippets of the truth about the coming Messiah and it set them ablaze to find out more. They searched furiously to know the person and the time of the coming Messiah. Well, here we are – with all of those facts in place. We have the prophecy, and we have the key to unlock all prophecy – the Messiah in the flesh – Jesus of Nazareth. We have the whole New Testament which makes known the coming of the Messiah in all of its glorious effect. So, we too should be like the prophets, only with more clarity. Having more revelation from God should our seeking for truth about the Messiah be less or more than the Prophets of old?
 - This radically changes your daily Bible reading. You hold in your hands the continuous and harmonized word of God which is all about this central reality – the true grace of salvation in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. In the Old Testament He is prophesied and foreshadowed on every page. In the New Testament He is proclaimed and proven and explained on every page. This whole book is about the work of God to save His people from their sins through the sending of this Savior. And so, if you believe this – if you know this great mercy – if you have experienced this new birth – then bless the God of your salvation by increasing in your understanding of and love for and searching out His Holy Word!
- Seeking the Cross, not the Crown
 - Second – bless God by seeking the cross, not the crown. This is the path set by our Savior, and it is one we must follow. We must adopt and live according to a theology of the Cross. We are people of the Cross before we are ever people of the crown. Christ made known to us that if we follow Him we will be hated in this world and we will experience and know tribulation. But we are to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. In other words, the suffering against sin and Satan and the hardship of running the race of faith in pursuit of our Savior will one day be met with the crown of full victory and final rest. But until that day, we must live according to the Cross.
 - This does not mean that we are earning our salvation by taking our stripes. Jesus did that once and for all. The punishment is paid, the condemnation is over. But the shame of the cross continues for those who will cling to Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone. The world and the Devil are more strongly opposed to this reality than they are to any other. The exclusive truth of the Gospel of Jesus is sure to put you at odds with those who do not believe. This is what Peter is

going to lay out for us in the rest of this letter. He is going to explain to us the way of the Cross in the face of an opposed world and a sin-stained heart.

- We can't get this mixed up. This is what the Medieval Church had so desperately missed. They had a theology of glory and not a theology of the cross. They thought that Jesus' cross guaranteed the current glory of the Church and the spread of God's kingdom. This turned into kingdom building in this world through great and glorious displays of power by the church and her leadership. But men like Martin Luther shouted loud and clear to make known that the Gospel way was a way of humiliation, not a way of glory in this life. We enter in through the humiliation of our Savior and his shame-filled death on the Cross, and we walk each day in the strength of his resurrected life as we follow the way of the Cross, enduring the shame because of the joy which is set before us in the coming glory of our Lord. We bless God by running the race of faith as Christ quietly builds His Church in the shadows of the Cross.