

II. Our Eternal Inheritance

September 14/16/17, 2020

1 Peter 1:3-12

Aim: To rejoice in all aspects of our salvation, past, present, and future.

McKnight: Grammatically, our passage is one massive run-on sentence. While such lengthy sentences (ten verses!) tweak the nose of modern English teachers, Peter's grammar is wonderfully elegant as well as profoundly expressive of the grandeur of his subject: salvation.... Our passage is essentially a eulogy to the Father that overflows into a fuller eulogy touching on the joyful expectations of salvation, on how that expectation can sustain Christians in suffering, and on how privileged they ought to feel about being the ones who get to enjoy that salvation after millennia of expectation.

Gardner: Verse 3 begins a section of this letter that in the Greek is one sentence to the end of verse 12! Such long sentences have to be broken down in English to make them more comprehensible, but what we have here is a true pouring out of Peter's heart as he thinks of the saving power of God in his own life and in the lives of all who have been chosen by God. In verse 3 Peter includes himself as one who has been given new birth. But then, from verse 4, he seeks to encourage and challenge his readers to understand the depths of this salvation by using the second person plural 'you.' Though all of what Peter says here can be applied to the individual Christian, it is important to remember that Peter is addressing the churches in these provinces.... Each individual among them need to know that he or she was part of the whole people of God.

McKnight: Peter begins with the theme of salvation because he has already made conversion/salvation the foundation of his salutation (1:1-2).... He will proceed [later in the letter] to talk about ethics and lifestyle, but before doing so, he must make clear the foundation. That foundation is the salvation of God, and it is only on this foundation that Peter constructs the life of the church.... Peter will not let ethics come to the fore until he speaks of salvation, the foundation of morality. He blesses God for salvation; in light of that salvation, he goes on to say, 'Therefore, live a good life' (see 1:13-2:10).

A. Salvation's Future Glory (1 Peter 1:3-5)

MacArthur: The apostle Peter follows the introduction of his first letter with a sweeping doxology regarding the wonder of salvation. He considered it essential to begin the body of the letter with this joyous paean of praise inasmuch as the believers he addressed faced severe persecution from Rome. The passage is a hymn of worship designed to encourage Christians living in a hostile world to look past their temporal troubles and rejoice in their eternal inheritance.

McKnight: The sentence is simple in that it is a statement of praise to God, and the blessing is directed to the God *and* Father. This God and Father is blessed because He has given us a new birth. This new birth is the result of His mercy, which grows into a living hope; that hope is defined as an inheritance. Put differently, Peter blesses the God and Father because of salvation and its manifold benefits.

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1. Doxology (1:3a)

³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Sproul: a doxology is a hymn of praise. The word comes from the Greek *doxa*, which refers to glory that is ascribed to God, because it belongs eternally and intrinsically to Him. The concept of glory in the Bible refers to the weightiness of God, the depth of His character.... Doxology is at the very heart of true worship, and this is how Peter begins.

a) *Blessed*

Dorani: The NIV translates Peter's first words as 'Praise' be to God, while the ESV says 'Blessed' be God. It is easy to defend both choices. The word that Peter uses, *eulogētos*, means 'blessed.' Yet Peter does not bless God in the way that God blesses us. God *gives us* His blessing, but we *declare* that God is the Blessed One. Full of knowledge and strength (1:2, 5), He gives us grace, mercy, and life (1:2-3). When we say these things, we *praise* God. God doesn't *need* our blessing, so in one sense we cannot bless Him. As Hebrews 7:7 notes, the greater blesses the lesser. God doesn't need to hear nice words in order to feel better about Himself or to stay motivated to do good. Rather, it is good *for us* to declare God's excellence.

MacArthur: Peter assumes it is necessary for believers to bless God. The intention is so implicit that the Greek text omits the word 'be,' which the translated added. (In the original, the sentence literally begins, 'Blessed the God,' which conveys Peter's expectation that his audience 'bless God' as the source of all spiritual inheritance.)

Gardner: Peter praises God. Similar words of praise to God are found in Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 1:3, but they find their origin in the Old Testament (e.g., Ps. 106:48; 1 Kgs. 8:15).

Helm: Significantly, because Peter does anything else, he rises to pronounce a *blessing on God*. *Notice:* he doesn't immediately write about difficult circumstances—there will be time enough for that. Neither is he compelled to begin by telling them how to conduct themselves while living in an evil world—evidently there will be enough time for that later on as well. What he does is this: he calls upon his readers to make a decided and determined prayer of praise. We know this because Jewish prayers most often opened with the time-honored word *blessed*. In particular, 'Blessed be God.' ... Peter calls upon his early readers, wherever they may be, to stand and praise God.... Peter knows that when their echoes of *blessing* are made in response to his call, their hearts and minds will be transported across the rugged terrain that separates them from their spiritual homeland.... And thus with one phrase, even a single word, Peter gathers a distant and scattered people on his wings and in mutual prayer carries them all the way to the throne room of Heaven.

b) *God the Father*

MacArthur: Peter further calls Him *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, a phrase that identified God in a distinctly Christian way. Historically, the Jews had blessed God as their creator and redeemer from Egypt. His creation emphasized His sovereign power at work and His redemption of Israel from Egypt His saving power at work. But those who became Christians were to bless God as the Father of their Lord Jesus Christ.

Sproul: The New Testament concept of Christ's being the Son of God is central to biblical theology. Not only is Jesus the Son of God, but also He is what the Apostle John describes as the *monogenēs*, the only Son of God.... Christ is the Son of God by nature. Scripture tells us that by nature we are children of wrath, children of Satan, so we must never take for granted the

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privilege of speaking of God as ‘Father.’ In the first instance He is the Father only of Christ and, by extension, of us only when we are adopted into His family. We are not by nature children of God. Jesus is by nature the child of God; we are by super nature the children of God.

Gardner: Here God is said to be the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He is not the Father of Jesus in the sense that the Son was created by the Father. Rather, the Fatherhood of God speaks of His relationship with Christ.

McKnight: The expression ‘Father of’ gave rise to the heresy known as Arianism, in which it was argued that God the Father actually generated the Son and, therefore, the Son is not eternal. But this expression describes the subordination of the Son to the Father by choice, not in essence.

c) *Our Lord Jesus Christ*

Sproul: The title ‘Lord,’ the Greek word *kyrios*, is the translation of the Old Testament title *Adonai*, which was reserved for God alone. It is the supreme title of God that calls attention to His sovereignty.

MacArthur: One commentator calls Peter confession in verse 3 of Christ’s full redemptive name ‘a concentrated confession.’ All that the Bible reveals about the Savior appears in that time: *Lord* identifies Him as sovereign Ruler; *Jesus* as incarnate Son; and *Christ* as anointed Messiah-King. The apostle personalizes that magnificent title with the simple inclusion of the pronoun *our*. The divine Lord of the universe belongs to all believers, as does Jesus who lived, died, and rose again for them, and as the Christ, the Messiah whom God anointed to be their eternal King who will grant them their glorious inheritance.

Dorani: In verse 3, Peter cites Jesus’ full title, ‘our Lord Jesus Christ,’ which appears about thirty-five times in eleven different books of the New Testament. Working backward, *Christ* means that He is the promised Messiah. *Jesus* means that He is Savior; in Hebrew *Joshua/Jesus* means ‘Yahweh saves.’ *Lord* means that He rules all things. Beyond all that, He is *ours*, and we are His. So He is the Lord and *our* Lord. He is God’s Anointed, and Yahweh saves through Him.

2. Regeneration (1:3b)

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

a) *Great Mercy*

According to his great mercy...

Dorani: The opening verses of Peter are steeped in covenantal language. Peter has already said that God elects and has foreknowledge of His people. His *mercy* (*hesed* in the Old Testament, *eleos* in the LXX and New Testament) is closely linked to God’s covenant name and covenant-making deeds. He shows mercy (*hesed* is also translated ‘steadfast love’) to thousands who love Him (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; cp. Ex. 34:6).

MacArthur: His *great mercy* was the motive behind God’s granting believers eternal life.... *Mercy* focuses on the sinner’s miserable, pitiful condition. The gospel is prompted by God’s compassion toward those who were dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3).... *Mercy* is not the same as grace. *Mercy* concerns an individual’s miserable condition, whereas *grace* concerns his guilt, which caused that condition. Divine *mercy* takes the sinner from misery to glory (a

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change of condition), and divine grace takes him from guilt to acquittal (a change of position; see Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7).

Gardner: It is a very *great mercy* that the Father has given us this new life in which twin goals are revealed. First, the new birth is into a living hope; ... but the new birth also leads into an imperishable inheritance.

McKnight: Peter tells the readers that they have benefited from this new birth because of God's *mercy*. 'Mercy' is that pity God shows toward humans in spite of their sin and because of their total helplessness to right their wrongs. God permits them to be part of the special people of His favor (2:10). This great new birth sets off a chain reaction in his plan of redemption. His mercy stimulates their new birth, and their new birth stimulates a 'living hope.'

b) *Born Again*

... *he has caused us to be born again...*

Doriani: *Give new birth* translates one Greek verb (*anagennaō*) that appears only in 1 Peter. The term echoes Jesus' teaching of Nicodemus, Israel's teacher, that he had to be born anew and born of the Spirit if he hoped to see God's kingdom (Jn. 3:1-10). Nicodemus and Peter, Jews and Gentiles, you and I—all need God's Spirit to breathe life into our dead souls.... In His mercy, God has given us three things: a living hope (1:3), an inheritance (1:4), and salvation (1:5). All three follow our new birth.

Gardner: *New birth* picks up on the idea of God as Father. This is *His* activity. The Father has caused those who are His elect to be 'born again,' and He has done this simply out of His divine *mercy*. In other words, though it was not at all deserved, God provided His people with new life (see 1:23; cp. 2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 3:3).

MacArthur: In order for sinners to receive an eternal inheritance from God, they must experience His means of spiritual transformation, the new birth. Peter affirms that truth in this last portion of verse 3, when he says God has caused believers *to be born again*.

McKnight: The new birth God has given to Peter and his readers, changing their status before God (2:24; 3:18, 21); Titus 3:5) and their lifestyle before others (1:22-23), theologians call *regeneration*.

Sproul: The sovereign God, from all eternity, decrees those to whom He will give the gift of faith, which is the fruit of regeneration, not the cause of it. The Reformation church declared that regeneration precedes faith, which is a distinguishing article of Reformed theology. We tend to get that backwards and think that our faith is what causes us to be reborn. Unless we are born of the Spirit, Jesus said to Nicodemus, we cannot see the kingdom of God, let alone enter it. Regeneration is what provokes and plants faith in our souls. The very condition that God requires for justification is by His grace sovereignly supplied.... You are absolutely powerless to effect your rebirth. Only God in His supernatural power can cause you to be born again. You did not generate it or seek after God. He sought after you. In His mercy and grace, the Spirit of God invaded your soul and changed that heart of stone into a heart of flesh. He gave you the desire for Christ and brought you as a gift to Christ.

c) *Living Hope*

.... *to a living hope...*

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Gardner: The theme of hope is one of the key themes in the letter. The Christian ‘hope’ describes the conviction that certain things will happen in the future.... It is the conviction that God’s work *in* us and *for* us through Jesus Christ will be brought to final completion successfully, for God is faithful and always delivers on His promises. The hope here is *living*, because it is a vibrant reality throughout life for the believer.

MacArthur: Peter goes on to declare that regeneration results in believers receiving a *living hope*. The unbelieving world knows only dying hopes (Job 8:13; Pr. 10:28; Eph. 2:12), but believers have a living, undying hope (Ps. 38:18; 39:7; Rom. 5:5; Eph. 4:4; Titus 2:13; Heb. 6:19) that will come to a complete, final, and glorious fulfillment (Rom. 5:2; Col. 1:27).

McKnight: His mercy stimulates their new birth, and their new birth stimulates a ‘living hope.’ This orientation toward the future that God will bring through Christ constantly appears in this letter (e.g., 1:3, 13, 21; 3:5, 15). It is not so much that believers are now living ‘full of hope,’ but that they have a fixed ‘hope,’ a clear vision of what God will do for them in the future.

Sproul: In biblical categories, the word *hope* means something different from its common usage in our secular culture. In our culture hope reflects our subjective desire. I hope that something will take place in the future, but I don’t know for sure that it will. In biblical categories, this hope is the certainty and the fullness of assurance that God will do in the future everything that He says He will do. We have been born again to a hope, a living and lasting hope.

d) Resurrection

... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

Gardner: Indeed, we know that eternal life has already begun with the new birth (Jn. 3:15-16). But this hope also speaks to our future, because our future rests on the fact of *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Because Jesus has been raised the church of God can know that she too will be raised (see 1 Cor. 15:20-23). All those who are suffering and feel that they do not really belong to this world, because they have been chosen by God and sprinkled with the blood of Christ, are assured that they too will be raised. This living hope is truly one of the greatest of all blessings for us all as we live this life for the Lord.

MacArthur: The means of Christians’ appropriating this living hope and eternal inheritance is spiritual birth, and the power for that appropriation was demonstrated by *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.

Dorani: The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope because it proves that death is not the last word. Death could not hold Him (Acts 2:24), and it cannot hold us if we are united to Him by faith (Rom. 5:21-6:9).

Sproul: This hope is inseparably related to the resurrection, because it is grounded in the reality that when God raised His Son from the dead, He raised Him as the firstborn of many brethren, and that all who are in Him will share in that resurrection life. We have been born again not just to have a better quality of life in this world, not simply to be given a second chance, but to life a life that goes on forever, sustained by the power of the resurrected Christ.

Helm: He reminds us that our ability to arrive safely at God’s home is rooted in God’s mercy and is grounded in one great truth—we are ‘born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ The remedy for...the soul’s homesickness is found only in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Jesus, the elect and chosen one of God who voluntarily left

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His home and descended to an exilic-like existence on this earth, has returned to Heaven. It is through His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into Heaven that we who go by His name have been *born again to a living hope*.... In showing the activity of God in the past, he helped his early readers regain hope for the future.

3. Inheritance (1:4)

a) *What It Is (4:a)*

⁴...to an inheritance...

Helm: Our hope consists of the *inheritance* that is being *kept* for us *in heaven*.

MacArthur: The key word of this entire passage [vv. 3-5] is *inheritance*, which is wealth passed down, or a legacy one receives as a member of a family. The concept had roots in the Old Testament, which the Jewish Christians in Peter's audience would have easily identified with. In fact, the same Greek root (*klēronomia*) rendered 'inheritance' here, is used in the Septuagint to speak of the portions of Canaan allotted by God to each tribe in Israel except Levi (cp. Num. 18:20-24; Jos. 13:32-33).... *Klēronomia* is often translated 'possession' in English translations of the Old Testament.... Peter told his readers that just as Israel received an earthly inheritance, the land of Canaan, so the church receives a spiritual inheritance in heaven (Acts 20:32; 26:19; Eph. 1:11, 18; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Heb. 9:15). The apostle reminded them that in the midst of their persecution they ought to praise God and patiently wait for His promised eternal *inheritance*.

Doriani: An inheritance is a *gift* based on a relationship, not a wage for performance. Because the gift rests on the Father's grace and covenant, and because God keeps *us* safe, our inheritance is safe.

Sproul: All this language is tied up with family terminology—children, fathers, birth, rebirth—and now Peter introduces the concept of inheritance.... The inheritance Peter has in mind is part of this living hope 'reserved in heaven for you.' The reservation of that inheritance is not restricted to the believers of Asia Minor who received this epistle. It is for you and me, as well. If we have been reborn in the power of the Spirit, we have been reborn to a living hope and to an inheritance that is reserved for us. It is the inheritance that first belonged only to the Son of God. Having been adopted and reborn into the family of God, we become heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Whatever inheritance God the Father has reserved for His Son, He now shares with all those who have been adopted in the Son.

Gardner: Having been born into the family of God an inheritance awaits us. The beauty is that we know of this from the day of our new birth.... On the day of salvation, the day when Christ comes in glory, all God's promises of a land, of peace, of His presence with His people, of His people's own glorification, all will come to final and complete fruition.

McKnight: The chain reaction continues: Not only does the new birth stimulate a 'living hope,' but that living hope is defined by *an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade*. The children of God, who have received new birth, can look forward to a special inheritance because they are God's children, That inheritance is their completed salvation (1:3, 4, 5, 6-9) and eternal life in the kingdom of God, where they will enjoy worship, praise, and blessing directed toward the Father, Son, and Spirit.

b) *What It Is Not (4:b)*

...that is *imperishable, undefiled, and unfading*...

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Doriani: In language that is almost poetic in the original, Peter says that this inheritance is ‘imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.’ Nothing can spoil our inheritance. It is ‘untouched by death, unstained by evil, unimpaired by time; it is compounded of immortality, purity, and beauty.’ Nothing can jeopardize it and nothing can ruin it.

Helm: Evidently Peter finds it difficult to find words that do justice in capturing the greatness of this future inheritance. In describing it, he can do no better than use three words that tell us what it is not: *imperishable, undefiled, unfading*. These three words are put forward by way of contrast, to help us get our minds around the magnitude of our inheritance. These words are not merely synonyms.... Rather each word has a distinct meaning, and each is specially chosen. Further, each one comes with a nuanced purpose: *imperishable* means ‘not able to be destroyed’; *undefiled* means ‘not polluted’; *unfading* means ‘not subject to decay.’ Such is Peter’s way of describing the Christian’s inheritance. He can’t tell us very much about what it will be like, but he helps us, nonetheless, by revealing what it is *not* like.

MacArthur: Peter adds three descriptive terms to further define the kind of inheritance believers will obtain.... *Imperishable (aphtharton)* refers to what is not corruptible, not liable to death, or not subject to destruction. Unlike the Israelites’ earthly inheritance, that came and went because of their sins, believers’ spiritual inheritance will never be subject to destruction. Believers’ inheritance in heaven, yet to be revealed in the future, is a glorious treasure that will never be lost. *Undefiled (amianton)* describes things that are unstained or unpolluted. Everything in the fallen creation is stained and polluted by sin (Rom. 8:20-22; 1 Jn. 5:19), and therefore it is all flawed.... All earthly inheritance is defiled, but not the ‘undefiled’ inheritance believers have in Jesus Christ (cp. Phil. 3:7-9; Col. 1:12). It is flawless and perfect. Finally, the believers’ inheritance *will not fade away*. That phrase translates the word *amaranton*, which was used in secular Greek to describe a flower that did not wither or die. The term in this context suggests that believers have an inheritance that will never lose its magnificence.... None of the ravages of time or the evils of sin can touch the believer’s inheritance because it is in a timeless, sinless realm (cp. Dt. 26:15; Ps. 89:29; 2 Cor. 5:1). Later in this letter, Peter reiterates the unfading nature of the church’s inheritance: ‘And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory’ (5:4).

Sproul: Peter does not tell us the exact content of the inheritance at this point, but he does describe it, and he does so in negative terms, telling us three things that it is not. First, it is an *inheritance incorruptible*. The inheritance cannot be destroyed, which is the meaning of ‘incorruptible’ here. When we make an investment for the future in stocks of some venture, we are taking a risk because the investment might fail. The inheritance reserved for us in heaven is not subject to the vagaries of the stock market. This inheritance is incorruptible, which means not only that it will not be corrupted, but that it cannot be corrupted. This inheritance is also *undefiled*. It is not dirty money. It has not been laid up and reserved as a result of criminal enterprises but has been won through perfect purity and is so protected by God in heaven that nothing ever can spoil or defile it. It is undefiled because it cannot be defiled. Additionally, this inheritance *does not fade away*.... The flower fades, the grass withers, but the Word of the Lord and the inheritance of the saints never fades away (Is. 40:8).

Gardner: Further, this inheritance will never be squandered by the parents! It *can never perish, spoil, or fade*. Perhaps the picture is of a precious treasure trove where the gold continues to shine forever. Most earthly things eventually decay, but here the inheritance refers to all the promises that God has made to His people. These never pass away or decay. Indeed, this offers

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a stark contrast with the repeated emphasis on the inheritance offered in the Old Testament to Abraham and his descendants. The inheritance of the land was eventually taken away, and the gold of Israel was captured and the buildings of Jerusalem were torn down. What Peter is speaking of, therefore, both contrasts with what was experienced in the Old Testament but also offers the final and true fulfilment of all those promises.

c) *Where It Is Now (1:4c)*

...kept in heaven for you...

Gardner: Presently, this inheritance is *kept in heaven for you*. That is, it is kept for all God's people in the very presence of God Himself. It is kept for the time when they shall be ushered into His presence by His Son.

MacArthur: Having pledged that the believer's spiritual inheritance was permanent in nature, Peter adds to his readers' security by declaring that the believer's inheritance is *reserved in heaven*. Its nature is fixed and unalterable and so is its place. *Reserved (tetērēmenēn)* means 'guarded' or 'watched over.' The perfect passive participle conveys the idea of the already existing inheritance being carefully guarded in heaven for all those who trust in Christ. Not only will that inheritance not change, but no one will plunder it.

4. Security (1:5)

⁵*...who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Sproul: While it is being kept for eternity, the same power that keeps the inheritance reserved for us is the power that keeps us reserved for the inheritance. It is the power of God that keeps us to receive the full and final measure of salvation.

Helm: This great promise is being *kept* for us through God's eternal power. And all of it will be revealed in its fullness on the day Jesus returns!

a) *Shielding Power (1:5a)*

⁵*...who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation...*

Gardner: Peter now turns to describe God's great power in providing for their salvation: *you...who...are shielded by God's power....* The word *shielded* recalls the protection that might be offered by an armed force (the same word is used in 2 Cor. 11:32). This work of salvation is all from God's mercy and according to His will and foreknowledge, yet the means by which God does this is *through faith*. The comfort in what Peter says here is even deeper when we realize that it is not their faith that shields Christians till the end but *God's power*. However, Christians lay hold on God's power by means of their exercise of faith. At the end of the day their faith is firmly 'in God' (1:21). As they trust in God, so they find that He does indeed shield and protect them during all their trials and sufferings. God began this work and He will ensure that they survive whatever is thrown at them in this world, and He will ensure that they will arrive safely on the day of Christ's return.

MacArthur: Not only is the inheritance divinely guarded, those who possess it are also *protected by the power of God* from doing anything to forfeit it or be severed from it. God's power is His sovereign omnipotence that continuously protects His elect. If God is for believers, no one can

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successfully oppose them (Rom. 8:31-39; Jude 24). All the details of this promise are to provide the believer with an undying hope of heaven, so as to provide joy and endurance.

McKnight: This inheritance is kept for God's people in heaven, guarded by God's power. The only condition God sets for His people is that they must have faith; no biblical author guarantees final salvation apart from faith.

Dorani: Nothing can keep this inheritance from us, and, Peter declares, nothing can keep us from it... The symmetry is perfect. God keeps the inheritance for us, and He keeps us for the inheritance. He keeps the treasure for us, *and* He guards us so that we will properly enjoy it. (The Greek verbs are different. The first, *tēreō*, means 'to keep' or 'guard.' The second, *phroureō*, means 'to guard' or 'watch over.' Clearly, their meanings are close.)

b) Ready Salvation (1:5b)

... for a salvation ready to be revealed...

Gardner: This shielding takes place until *the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time* has arrived. *Salvation* is past, present, and future in Scripture. God's people are encouraged in that they *were* saved by grace through Christ's work of salvation (Eph. 2:5, 8). The present experience of believers is that 'we are saved' (Acts 15:11). But the dominant New Testament emphasis is on the future nature of salvation when God's people will be saved from the judgment that Christ's return will bring to those who have not placed their faith in Him. This will be the great day 'when Jesus Christ is revealed' (1:7, 13). Peter also speaks of it as the day of Christ's 'glory' (4:13; 5:1). For the faithful it will be a wonderful time of rejoicing. However, it is also the day when judgment comes, serving to remind Christians of the need to live appropriate lives in this age (1:17), and providing unbelievers with a most sober warning (4:5, 17).

MacArthur: *Salvation* (*sōtērian*) means 'rescue' or 'deliverance,' and here it denotes the full, final, eternal life God has not yet consummated. The New Testament implicitly reveals a threefold chronology for salvation. The past aspect of salvation is justification; it comes when one believes in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10, 14-17) and is delivered from the penalty of sin. The present aspect of salvation is sanctification. Believers are continually being delivered from the power of sin (1 Jn. 1:9)... Third, salvation also has a future aspect, glorification (cp. Rom. 13:11). Whenever a believer dies, God completely and finally delivers him from the presence of sin (cp. Heb. 9:28) and instantly brings him into his eternal inheritance in His heavenly presence.... The future aspect of salvation is particularly said to be *ready*, that is, complete and already awaiting the believer's arrival.

c) Last Time (1:5c)

...ready to be revealed in the last time.

Gardner: *The last time* refers to that day when the King comes and all His foes, and the foes of His people, will be destroyed and they will come into their inheritance (5:4) and so experience their salvation.

MacArthur: But future salvation is also connected to the end of human history. Peter says it is *to be revealed in the last time*. God will not make believers' inheritance fully complete until the last episode of redemptive history, namely the return of Jesus Christ (cp. Mt. 25:34).

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McKnight: This faith is a faith in *the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time*. In sum, the new birth gives rise to a living hope that is defined by an inheritance that is guarded by faith in that final salvation.

5. Summary

Sproul: Do you see why Peter gives a doxology? Peter could have given the benediction after this opening statement, because in these few lines he communicates to these Christians of the Diaspora the heart and soul of the Christian faith.

Helm: Within the first five verses he has set them on their feet and told them what they need to do. They need to rise up and bless God (v. 3). They need to pull again on the anchor of their living hope—namely the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (v. 3). They need to be reminded that the inheritance they are going to receive is so extraordinary that there are not words to describe it (v. 4). Peter can only tell them that it will never be destroyed, it will never be polluted, it will never be subject to decay. Finally, Peter affirms that this great future is kept for us by the power of God. Nothing on earth can shake it loose from those who are in Christ (v. 5).

B. Salvation’s Present Story (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Helm: That God’s elect, His chosen and beloved, should experience trials and the weight of exile is perplexing. In some measure, Peter is writing to remind us of this very thing. He now asks his readers to consider salvation’s future glory (1:3-5) in light of present-day adversity (1:6-9). Therefore, the verse before us (6-9) lend balance to the Christian’s delightful anticipation of Heaven (vv. 3-5). We are reminded that the inheritance will not be won without enduring myriad difficulties first. To put it differently, after bursting forth in joyful song on Heaven (vv. 3-6a), Peter now turns to compose a sonnet uniting woe to joy (vv. 6b-9).

1. The Response of Joy (1:6a)

6In this you rejoice...

Sproul: What is the antecedent of *this*? ... I think it is clear that the antecedent is the work of God in His grace by which we have been begotten again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ to that inheritance that Peter described as incorruptible and undefiled, that does not fade away and that is reserved for us in heaven. We rejoice in that promised inheritance that shall be ours in glory. Peter tells his readers that the inheritance and the news of their having been begotten to an eternal reward provoke within them right now exceeding joy. The Christian life in all circumstances is to manifest that fruit of the Spirit, joy. The joy that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit is not a mere fleeting sense of happiness; it is something that provokes within us an abundance of rejoicing.

Gardner: The word ‘salvation’ summarizes all that is involved in the glorious living hope and inheritance, and so *in this*, that is, in all that Peter has spoken of in verses 3-5, Christians find that they *greatly rejoice*. What tremendous joy and comfort there is in the experience of God’s mercy in new birth, in knowing the living hope and the inheritance that belongs to God’s people! What joy there is in knowing that God’s power protects and shields His people through this life so they may come at last to that great day of salvation at the return of Christ.

MacArthur: *Greatly rejoice* (from *agalliaō*) is an intense, expressive term that means to be supremely and abundantly happy—a happiness that is not tentative nor based on circumstances

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or superficial feelings. Jesus used it in Matthew 5:12 in addition to the more ordinary word for ‘rejoice’ (*chairō*).... In the New Testament, *agalliaō* always refers to spiritual rather than temporal joy, and it usually has reference to a relationship with God (cp. 1:8; 4:13; Lk. 1:47; 10:21; Acts 2:26; 16:34; Rev. 19:7). Furthermore, since Peter put it in the present tense, it conveys the notion of *continual* joy and happiness.

McKnight: Abruptly, Peter begins to comment on the joy that suffering believers have as they contemplate that final day: *in this you greatly rejoice*. That is, contemplating salvation and its forthcoming climax generates great joy in the hearts of the believers, a joy so great they can endure suffering.

Doriani: At that moment, the Christians of Asia Minor were suffering grief, but Peter teaches that the prospect of an inheritance, secured by God, still brings joy. We can celebrate because we know that the salvation that is already ours will one day be revealed in full.

2. The Reality of Trials (1:6b-7)

Sproul: A central motif of this letter is the suffering and affliction that the Christians of the Diaspora were enduring at that time. The epistle is a letter of consolation and comfort, reminding them of the future hope that awaits them. Peter mentions that their trials are temporary, and also that they have a purpose.

a) Trials (1:6b)

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

McKnight: The *problem* facing these Christians in Asia Minor is that they are suffering *grief in all kinds of trials*—even if it is *now for a little while*.

Gardner: To a suffering church that was beginning to experience a more sustained persecution while seeking to honor the Lord in a pagan society, Peter says that they continue to *greatly rejoice even though*, for a time, they may have to *suffer grief in all kinds of trials*. It is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian life that we can find ourselves rejoicing in the promises of the Lord even as we suffer true grief!

MacArthur: Peter next turns to a source of joy that has immense practical ramifications for believers—confidence in a proven faith. Rather than allow severe trials and persecutions to steal their joy and spoil their anticipation of future blessing in heaven genuine believers with a biblical perspective know that such sufferings actually can add to their joy as they experience grace and anticipate the future. In the remainder of verse 6 the apostle lists four concise features of the trouble God uses to prove believers’ faith.

(1) Are Transitory

MacArthur: First, he declares that their troubles are *now for a little while*. They are transitory (cp. Ps. 30:5; Is. 54:7-8; Rom. 8:18), literally ‘for a season,’ which means they will pass quickly as does one’s time on earth (cp. 2 Cor. 4:17).

Gardner: Peter acknowledges that not all Christians suffer, for he writes that ‘you *may* have had to suffer.’ Suffering usually comes to all Christians at some point (Phil. 1:29), but not all suffer in the same way or to the same depth or at the same time.

Doriani: Their suffering is brief—*for a little while*—from the perspective of eternity, even if pain can seem to last forever when we are immersed in it.

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(2) Are Necessary

MacArthur: Second, troubles come *if necessary*; that is, when they serve a purpose in believers' lives (cp. Job 5:6-7; Acts 14:22; 1 Th. 3:3).

Gardner: The theological explanation begins as Peter says they 'may have *had* to suffer.' One of the strange things about sufferings is that they are present to us in Scripture as *necessary*. In other words, they are there for a reason, and, as Peter will show, God has them under His control and uses them for His purposes (cp. Acts 14:22).

Dorani: Peter says that His people *had to suffer*. He says this because suffering is a logical result of conversion. It is 'the wake following behind salvation's boat.' It was predictable because following God entails abandoning 'the gods' whose worship was part of the glue that united Roman society. It was foreseeable because Christian morality clashed with pagan morality.

(3) Are Painful

MacArthur: Third, Peter with the term *been distressed* acknowledges that trouble undeniably brings pain (cp. Gen. 3:16-19; Ps. 42:7; 66:12; 89:30-32). *Distressed* refers not only to physical pain, but also to mental anguish, including sadness, sorrow, disappointment, and anxiety. BY God's design, trouble needs to be painful in order to refine believers for greater spiritual usefulness (cp. Ps. 34:19; 78:34; 119:71; Jn. 9:1-3; 11:3-4; 2 Cor. 12:10).

Gardner: This leads Peter to change tack again in order to comment on the purpose of *all kinds of trials* which have led many *to suffer grief*. One of the most difficult aspects of life for all Christians is learning to come to terms with the suffering and trials that all experience. Suffering may be physical or emotional or both.

(4) Are Varied

MacArthur: Fourth, the apostle notes in verse 6 that Christians experience *various trials*; troubles come in many forms (James 1:2). The Greek word rendered *various* is *poikilos*, which means 'many colored.' Later Peter uses the same word (rendered 'manifold' in the NASB and KJV) to describe the diverse grace of God (4:10). Just as trouble is diverse, God's sufficient grace for believers is equally diverse. There is no form of trouble that some facet of divine grace cannot supersede (cp. 1 Cor. 10:13). God's grace is sufficient for every human trial.

Gardner: *All kinds of trials* certainly means that Peter is not limiting himself here to the concerns of specific persecutions, though these may have figured most prominently in his concerns for the churches to which he writes.

Helm: We can say a few things about what Peter means by *various trials*. He is not speaking here of a localized trial or a season of suffering. Rather, he means: 1) there will be seasons in life when you will lack provision, power, position, protection, and a sense of permanence; 2) at times you will become the recipient of verbal or physical persecutions that arise on account of the Word; 3) that includes the pain experienced by those who have loved ones whose bodies appear to be wasting away before their very eyes; and 4) this includes the dark moments in life when we are asked to fend off the prowling attacks of Satan.

Helm: These difficulties may be temporal, occasional, and spasmodic (after all, 1:6 adds, 'if necessary'), but in the end Peter wants his readers to know that for anyone who takes up with

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Jesus, trials of some size and stripe are inevitable. We must go through the waters of tribulation if we are to arrive at our rightful inheritance, for wandering and woe are the earthly lots of any who desire to enter into an eternal rest characterized by joy.

b) Testing (1:7)

McKnight: But Peter wants them to see the *purpose* of their suffering (v. 7)... Whereas gold perishes when it is refined by fire, their faith will endure the fire of persecution, and will be proved genuine in the last day. Like James in James 1:3, Peter sees in suffering a situation from which believers can learn and grow.

(1) Proof (1:7a)

⁷...so that the tested genuineness of your faith—

Doriani: Suffering proves that our faith is real.

Helm: No sooner does he connect joy to woe than he begins explaining the purpose of life's trials.... Trials come for testing, and testing, like putting gold into the fire, is meant to prove the genuineness of one's faith. To put it differently, trials are the proving ground for our faith.

Sproul: Their trials and afflictions are not without a reason. There is a purpose clause here, namely, that the genuineness of their faith may be proved. On an earthly level, the afflictions endured by the recipients of the letter were foisted upon them by those in Asia Minor who were hostile to the gospel, hostile to Christ, and therefore hostile to Christians. In a real sense, their sufferings and afflictions were unjust—they were victims of persecution—but we have to see beyond the human dimension, the proximate cause of the suffering, and look to the remote or ultimate cause. These afflictions were sent upon the believers by God. God uses the iniquitous afflictions wrought by human hostility for the ultimate well-being of His children. In this text here we see a marvelous reaffirmation of the doctrine of the providence of God (cp. Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

MacArthur: *Proof (dokimion)* was used to describe the assaying of metal. The assaying process discovers a metal's purity and determines its true content and worth after all impurities have been smelted away (Num. 31:22-23; cp. Pr. 17:3; Zech. 13:9). By analogy, God tests the believer's faith to reveal its genuineness (cp. Job 23:10). (He does not do this because He needs to discover who is a true believer, but so that believers will gain joy and confidence in their proven faith)... The adjectival phrase *proof of your faith*, more accurately 'the tested residue of your faith,' captures the essence of the spiritual assaying process.

Gardner: Divine necessity in these trials specifically means that they are not arbitrary. One purpose for which they come upon Christians is to prove their faith is genuine. When faith is found to be genuine, then it will result in praise to Jesus when He comes in glory. So Peter continues to encourage His readers that before God faith is *of greater worth than gold*.... Gold has always been seen as having great worth and great beauty. Yet even gold usually contains impurities. It is only when *refined by fire*, a process in which gold is heated to a molten state that the impurities that come to the surface can be removed, that is, found to be pure, and even then it will still ultimately be destroyed or decay. So Peter here makes two points about faith as he compares it with gold.

Doriani: First, gold and faith are both proved by fire. Literal fire tests gold, and the metaphorical fire of adversity tests men and their faith (see Ps. 66:10; Pr. 17:3; James 1:2-4; etc.). Just as men

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used fire to distinguish true gold from counterfeit [and alloyed or imperfect metals], so God uses trials to distinguish genuine faith from superficial profession.

(2) Precious (1:7b)

—*more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire*—

Gardner: First, Peter contrasts the great worth of gold with the even *greater worth* of faith. The God who shields His people does so because He values people of faith so highly. Secondly, Peter shows that faith, like gold, can be *proved genuine* through testing. The suffering of God's people which have been called 'trials,' or perhaps better in this context, 'testings,' will prove whether their faith is genuine.

Doriani: Second, while gold was the most precious metal to the ancients, faith has greater value. Like every other created thing, gold is perishable (1:7, 18), but our faith is imperishable, since God preserves us in it (1:5).

MacArthur: Peter used *gold* in his analogy because it was the most precious and highly prized of all metals (Ezra 8:27; Job 28:15-16; Ps. 19:10; cp. 2 Kgs. 23:35; Mt. 2:11), and in ancient times it was the basis for most monetary transactions (cp. Ez. 27:22; Mt. 10:9). Just as *fire* separates gold from useless dross, so God uses suffering and trials to separate true faith from superficial profession. But even though gold can be purified when *tested by fire*, it is *perishable* (cp. James 5:3). However, proven faith is eternal, making it *more precious than gold*.

Helm: So be encouraged. You may find yourself on the anvil of suffering, but God is at work. He is testing the genuineness of your faith. And for Him, that faith has eternal value.

(3) Praise (1:7c)

—*may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*.

Doriani: Because suffering has a limit and a purpose, we can still rejoice in it.

Helm: Our willingness as Christians to endure earthly affliction says a lot about our trust in God. He is fashioning us into praiseworthy and honorable vessels for His glory.

Sproul: So, Peter says, we are grieved by trials that come upon us, but in the midst of them we can rejoice exceedingly, not only because of the inheritance laid up for us, but also because we can be sure that through these trials, the genuineness of our 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.

Gardner: Peter at least implies that the trials Christians experience can feel like a refining 'fire,' but his point is that the end outcome is proven faith and this will result *in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed*. A question arises here. Is this praise for the Christian who has endured such suffering and demonstrated a refined and proven faith, or is this praise for Jesus in whom the faith has been placed? Since Peter is speaking of the last day when Christ appears (*is revealed*), it is more likely here that Peter is thinking again of the inheritance that belongs to *Christians*.... This is *their* praise and glory and honor. They have suffered in many ways but their faith has been tried and proven. They are more valuable to God as His faithful people than any amount of gold, and so on that day their great value is recognized publicly by God and they are crowned with glory and honor.... At Christ's return, when all things are

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revealed, including the motives of a person's heart, Christians will be vindicated and so praised by God and receive honor and glory (1 Pe. 5:4).

MacArthur: The apostle's discussion of proven faith in the first part of verse 7 actually leads into his main point in the later half, namely that believers would rejoice in the prospect of a promised honor. True faith will ultimately come through all of life's troubles and trials and obtain eternal honor from God. Peter's focus is not on Christians' honoring God (though they will, cp. Mt. 28:16-17; Jn. 4:23; 9:38; Rev. 4:10-11), but on His commendation of them. God will grant believers *praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. Incredibly, believers, who in this life are called to give honor to the Lord always, can by their faithfulness in trials elicit praise from the Lord in the life to come (cp. 1 Sam. 2:26; Ps. 41:11; 106:4; Pr. 8:35; 12:2; Acts 7:46).... True saving faith and its resultant good works always receive divine commendation.... Peter also uses the term *glory*, which, like *praise*, refers to that which believers receive from God.... *Glory* may relate best to the Christlikeness God will endow every believer with (Jn. 17:22; Rom. 9:23; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:4; 2 Th. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:2).... *Honor* likely refers to the rewards God will give to believers because of their faithful service (cp. 1 Cor. 3:10-15).... This threefold tribute (*praise and glory and honor*) occurs *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. 'Revelation' (*apokalypsei*) refers to the second coming of Christ and particularly focuses on the time when He returns to reward His redeemed people.... It is an amazing truth that when Jesus returns for His own, not only will they joyfully serve Him, but also He will graciously serve and honor them.

3. The Result of Faith (1:8-9)

McKnight: Since his readers will be found acceptable to God on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed, Peter turns to the present relationship of these Christians to Jesus. Their *current response* is that they love Christ in spite of not having seen Him; furthermore, though they believe in Him and still do not see Him, they are *filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy*. Peter sees this response to the Lord as so potent that he describes it as the inauguration of their final salvation: *for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls*.

Gardner: Authentic faith recognizes that this is the age of trust in what is not seen, and yet the relationship with Jesus is real and deep. Peter identifies two major characteristics of this relationship *even though [Christians] do not see Him now*.

a) Love (1:8a)

⁸*Though you have not seen him, you love him.*

Gardner: The first characteristic is that they *love Him*. Normally, we love the people with whom we speak and interact and *see*. But you, says Peter, *do not see Him now*. The time will come when Jesus will be revealed, but His current hiddenness does not stop a Christian's love for Jesus. In fact, love is a marker of God's people (Dt. 6:5; Mk. 12:30).... Love of Jesus and of God the Father involves a commitment of the whole person towards that relationship of trust and reliance. Love always reaches out towards its object and always wants the best for the other person.

MacArthur: The word 'love' (*agapate*) is the love of the will, the noblest form of love. The present tense indicates that Peter's audience constantly loved their Lord, which *love* defines the essence of being a Christian.

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Doriani: Peter's readers had not seen Jesus during His earthly life, as Peter himself had done, yet they were giving Him the responsive love of their hearts in living fellowship.

b) *Belief (1:8b)*

Though you do not now see him, you believe in him...

Gardner: The second characteristic of this relationship with Jesus is belief. Christians love, even without seeing, because they *believe in Him*. This means living a life which reflects true confidence in Him and His promises. Specially in this context it means being truly convinced that, though He is not seen, Jesus exists and one day will be revealed in such a way that all will see him. For now, as Paul reminds us in 2 Cor. 5:7, 'We live by faith, not by sight.' Thus, Peter makes the point that belief in Jesus and love for Him are continuing activities for Christians that carry them through every day of their lives even as the severest of trials, when necessary in God's unfathomable will, come their way.

MacArthur: Peter next commends his readers' faith and trust in Christ. Obviously, to *believe in Him* goes hand in hand with loving Him. The soul that loves Christ cannot help but believe in Him, and the soul that believes cannot help but love.... Thus love and trust are the two elements that bind believers to a living fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Doriani: Jesus looked past Thomas and saw *us* (cp. Jn. 20:29). He envisioned the day when all who believe must do so without the evidence that Thomas enjoyed.

c) *Joy (1:8c)*

...and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...

Gardner: This brings us back to the great paradox we spoke of before. In the midst of trials Christians find that love for Jesus and faith in Him result in them continually being *filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy*. Literally Peter writes, 'you rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and glorious.' ... What is *inexpressible* is the extent and depth and beauty of God's plan for His people. This joy comes from a trust and belief in God who has promised to do things at the return of Christ that truly we cannot even imagine at present, let alone express. Such a joy is gilded for us with the glorious presence of God since it also emanates from the true nature of this personal loving relationship that we experience even now with Jesus and the Father.

MacArthur: That wondrous relationship caused Peter's readers to *greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory*. 'Inexpressible' (*aneklalētō*) literally means 'higher than speech.' Those who live in personal communion with Christ experience a joy so divine that they cannot communicate it; humanly speaking, such joy is beyond the reach of speech and expression. And that joy is also *full of glory (doxazō)*, meaning 'to render highest praise' and from which *doxology* derives. In their fellowship with the Lord, believers have both a supernatural love (cp. Gal. 5:22; 2 Th. 3:5; 1 Jn. 4:19) and a transcendent joy (cp. Eccl. 2:26; Ps. 4:7; 21:6; 68:3; 97:11; Jude 24).

Doriani: Because this joy has its origin in God, not man, it is 'inexpressible,' that is, it defies perfect human expression.

Helm: *Inexpressible* joy is said to be the handmaiden to the suffering Christian. Interestingly, when Peter closed his thoughts on Heaven in verse 5 he wrote, *in this you rejoice* (v. 6). But here, when he finishes his thoughts on our suffering, he says that our rejoicing is largely *inexpressible*. In other words, think about Heaven and you will have something to say. But

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while you endure various trials, know that the joy they produce in you will be a quiet sort, a nonverbal kind, an ‘inexpressible...joy.’ The strange truth of the gospel is this: salvation’s future inheritance is gained during this season of present sufferings.

Sproul: Faith is refined so that at the last day, at the final consummation of the kingdom of Christ, it will be the occasion for praise, honor, and glory. God values your faith more than He values your gold or your present comfort.

d) Goal (1:9)

⁹...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Sproul: The word ‘end’ [*outcome*] here does not mean the final point of a journey, a destination; it means a goal, aim, or purpose, and the ultimate purpose of our faith, Peter says, is the salvation of our souls.... Peter is saying that the present we endure must be understood in light of the glorious future that God has raised for us.

Gardner: For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls suggests this is the reason for the joy: that they are receiving salvation.... They are experiencing such joy *and* they are receiving the goal of their faith which is their salvation. Day by day, as you love the Lord Jesus and believe in Him, so, says Peter, you [Christians] find that you are even now receiving the goal of that faith which is *the salvation of your souls*. Though Peter has specially spoken of the future nature of salvation, and although the salvation of your souls is not completed until Christ returns, already this salvation is a live and real experience for God’s people. *Soul* here refers to the whole person, body and spirit, and not only to the inner spirit. On the final day it will not only be the spirit of a person that shall experience salvation because the body will also be saved when it is raised from the dead and transformed into Christ’s likeness.

MacArthur: Peter is not looking at the future but at the here and now; one could literally rendering ‘obtaining’ (*komizomenoi*) ‘presently receiving for yourselves.’ The root, *komizō*, means ‘to receive what is deserved.’ Flowing out of believers’ personal fellowship with Christ is the result due them, the present *outcome* of their *faith*, namely *the salvation* of their *souls*. ‘Salvation’ refers to believers’ constant, present deliverance from the penalty and power of sin—from its guilt (Rom. 6:18; Eph. 1:7); Col. 2:13-14), condemnation (Rom. 8:1), wrath (Rom. 5:9; 1 Th. 1:10), ignorance (Rom. 10:3; Gal. 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:13), distress, confusion, hopelessness (1 Cor. 15:17; 1 Peter 1:3), and dominion (Rom. 6:10-12).

Dorani: The soul (*psuchē*) stands for the whole person, not the spirit or reason in contrast to the body. In Scripture, a human is a psychosomatic unity. The goal of redemption is not the liberation of the disembodied soul from this wretched life, as Greeks thought. It is a new creation, which the whole person enjoys forever, with both a new spirit and a new body, one much like the resurrection body of Jesus.

C. Salvation’s Past Study (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Helm: In the verses before us now (1:10-12), Peter will bring his introduction to a cascading close. He will unfurl three truths from salvation’s past in hopes of stirring their souls to restore gratitude toward God. And in the end he is making them ready to press on in the ongoing work of gracious gospel living (1:13ff.).

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Gardner: The thrust of verses 10-12 is that Christians are in a far better place than these prophets, for they have received clearer and more amazing gracious revelation from God about the nature of their salvation.

McKnight: Peter contends that this salvation, which the Asian Christians have enjoyed and for which they earnestly hope, is the very salvation that the ancient prophets (cp. Mt. 13:17) were seeking in all its details but never found. Peter's ultimate point is to demonstrate the privilege of enjoying salvation in his era, the privilege of living in the 'AD' rather than the 'BC' era.

Dorani: In 1:10-12, he explains how God speaks and why God's prophets (and apostles) speak with His authority. The first segment of Peter states the theme of all Scripture: 'In His great mercy [God] has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead' and an imperishable inheritance (1:3-4). Peter closes the unit by saying, 'The goal of your faith [is] the salvation of your souls' (1:9). Logically, Peter could have moved directly to his next theme, the holy conduct of His people. Instead, he pauses to explain the role of Scripture in their salvation.... Peter wanted to prepare his readers to grow through Scripture, both from the Old Testament and from the New Testament accounts of the suffering and glory of Christ (1:11).

4. The Prophets (1:10-11a)

¹⁰*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,* ¹¹*inquiring what person or time...*

a) Salvation

Dorani: First, salvation is the theme of Scripture: *Concerning this salvation, the prophets...spoke....* Second, God called and appointed spokesmen to record His Word—the prophets in the Old Testament ('the prophets who spoke') and the apostles such as Peter in the New Testament (cp. Eph. 3:4-5).... Third, Scripture's theme is God's grace, given for humanity. The prophets *spoke of the grace that was to come to you.*

Gardner: It is one of the more glorious teachings of Scripture that God planned in advance *the grace that was to come to Christians* (cp. Eph. 1:4).... God's revelation to the prophets therefore concerned this great plan in which He would eventually reveal the depth of His faithful loving mercy toward men and women living in sin and under His judgment. Here Peter assumes, as do all the New Testament writers, that the prophets of the Old Testament foretold the coming of Christ, the age of the New Covenant, and the time when God's salvation would be fully revealed on earth. They *spoke* of a better time and of the future *grace* that they knew they were not yet experience. *The grace that was to come to you* is Peter's way of summarizing the good news that Christ Himself was coming.

MacArthur: The apostle first draws attention to the *salvation* referred to in verse 9 from the viewpoint of *the prophets*. They were God's Old Testament spokesmen *who prophesied of the grace that would come*. They then pursued the meaning of their own prophetic writings to know all they could about God's promised salvation. Of all the truth the prophets received through divine revelation (cp. Hos. 12:10; Amos 3:7; Heb. 1:1; James 5:10), the truth of salvation was their greatest passion. From Moses to Malachi, all of the Old Testament prophets were fascinated by the promises of salvation. However, they did not merely *wish* to receive that salvation; they *actually* obtained it. But they received the gift of God's salvation without seeing its full accomplishment (cp. Heb. 11:39-40), without seeing Jesus Christ or having a relationship

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with Him. Though the prophets wrote of Messiah, they never fully comprehended all that was involved in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

MacArthur: The focus of the prophets' intense study in trying to comprehend the person and work of Christ was centered on *the grace that would come* to sinners through Him.... The prophets sought to understand God's *grace* and mercy in Christ, His forgiveness, goodness, unmerited favor, and blessing lavished on undeserving sinners. They knew that God's promise of a salvation by *the grace that would come* extended far beyond Israel to include people from every nation on earth (Is. 45:22; 49:6; 52:10; cp. Jn. 10:16; Rom. 15:9-12; 1 Jn. 2:2; Rev. 4:8-10; 7:9). It is crucial to emphasize that the phrase *prophesied of the grace that would come* does not indicate that the prophets looked forward to a saving grace that did not exist at all in Old Testament times. By nature God has always been an unchangeably gracious God (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 102:26-27; 116:5; James 1:17). In the Old Testament, He was gracious to those who believed before Christ came (cp. Ps. 84:11), and since then He is gracious to all who believe (Jn. 1:14).

b) Search

Helm: For the first time, Peter formally introduces us to past Hebrew prophets. He writes of *prophets who prophesied*. The prophets were some of Israel's ancient officeholders, beginning with Moses. The institution of the prophetic office can be found in Deuteronomy 18.... All of Israel's prophets, from Moses onward, *stood* in the presence of God to receive God's word and then *spoke* that word in the presence of all the people. What Peter is telling his readers in the verse before us is that the prophets' best days were spent searching out salvation's fulfillment. They were men who studied long and hard. They pored over God's word as He was giving it to them.

Gardner: The prophets were inspired by God to speak of this grace and salvation, but did not fully understand how He would bring complete forgiveness to undeserving sinners, nor how Gentiles would be incorporated into this gracious action of God. Yet, says Peter, the prophets longed to know more and *searched intently and with the greatest care*.

McKnight: Peter begins with the *prophetic inquiry* (1:10). To emphasize the diligence and intensity of the ancient prophets, Peter uses two terms, *searched intently and with the greatest care*. The two Greek words are *ekzeteō* and *exeraunaō*, the first signifying 'seeking out and searching,' the second 'inquiring carefully' (as when, for instance, invading military personnel inquire from house to house.... Their passion whether they knew the exact longing of their hearts or not, was the grace that the Asian Christians found in Christ.... Verse 11 gives the *topic* of the prophets' inquiry. They spoke about God's final salvation and the judgments that preceded that final day. Precisely when and under what circumstances such events were to occur they did not know, but they did inquire into such matters.

MacArthur: Though the Old Testament prophets knew that their writings described a future manifestation of salvation grace, their desire to understand those prophecies was still so compelling and pervasive that they *made careful searches and inquiries* into their own writings. Those two terms emphasize the intensity with which the prophets had delved into their prophecies and the diligence with which they had investigated them to better understand the magnitude of salvation grace.... Peter further indicates that the Old testament prophets were not interested in just the general doctrine of salvation or the general teaching about Messiah. They sought to know more precisely *what person* would come as savior, judge, prophet, priest, and

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king, and during what season or era (*time*) that coming would occur. The queries were about who and when.

5. The Spirit (1:11b-12a)

a) Predictions (1:11b)

...the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

Helm: What enabled God's prophets to go on? Verse 11 in our text reveals the answer. It was the Spirit of Christ in them.... It was the Spirit of Christ who enabled the prophets to pore over their sermons and visions. It was Christ in them who kept them reading the scrolls of other prophets who had gone before.

Dorani: Fourth, the Word came by inspiration of God's Spirit, and yet in such a way that the prophets and apostles were active, too. The prophets *searched intently and with the greatest care* (1:10). Yet God directed them, for the prophets *were trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing* (1:11). Fifth, while the prophets understandably inquired after the *timing* of God's work, Peter stresses the *content* of God's work and message, which he summarizes as *the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow* (1:11).

Gardner: The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit.... The one who is the Spirit of God is also, for Peter, the Spirit of Christ who spoke about His coming to the prophets of previous generations.

MacArthur: The prophecies the Holy Spirit revealed to the prophets were divinely inspired and recorded under His superintendence (cp. Jer. 1:9; 23:28; Ez. 2:7; Amos 3:7-8).... That Peter used the phrase *Spirit of Christ within them* (cp. Rom. 8:9) demonstrates that the eternal Christ, inseparable from the Holy Spirit, worked from within the Old Testament writers to record God's infallible revelation.... The Spirit was *indicating* (*edēlou*, 'making plain') to them *as He predicted* (*promarturomenon*, 'witnessed beforehand') what was coming. He was plainly testifying to the prophets about God's salvation that would be fully accomplished through Jesus Christ.... And the overall theme of those prophecies was twofold: *the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow*.

Helm: In essence, these words show us that the prophets were given a particular insight into salvation's mystery—that the Christ would be a *suffering* Christ—and that only after suffering would He be given *subsequent* glories. For the first-century religious Jew, this though was simply unacceptable. They wanted a Christ of glory. They had no time for a Messiah given over to suffering. Yet Peter's early readers had been saved by such a gospel. For the discouraged believer in Peter's audience, this reminder would have been greatly encouraging. The life they were living, filled as it was with trials and difficulties, mirrored the life of the Messiah, in whom they had put their trust.

(1) Sufferings

Gardner: Specifically, Peter says they wanted to know about the predicted *sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow*. Later in 2:21-25, Peter quotes from Isaiah 53 when referring to the sufferings of Christ, so it was probably this type of text which found the prophets themselves asking, 'What exactly am I speaking about? What sort of sufferings are these? What

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sort of glories will follow?’ Of course, the sufferings of Christ are indicated in other Old Testament passages as well, for example, in Psalm 22:6-18 and Zechariah 12:10.

MacArthur: The Old Testament refers to the *sufferings of Christ* in such passages as Ps. 22:1-31; Is. 52:13-53:12; Dan. 9:24-26; and Zech. 12:10; 13:7 (cp. Ps. 89:24-37; Lk. 24:25-27; Rev. 19:10).

(2) Glories

Gardner: The special glory of the coming King, the Messiah, is spoken of in many places, for example, in Psalm 24:7-10; Isaiah 59:19; 60:1-2; and Ezekiel 34:23-24. Given that it was in Christ’s ascension and exaltation following His sufferings and death, that the full glory of Christ was seen, Peter may also have had in mind passages such as Daniel 7:13-14.... The future glory of God’s people is spoken of in many places, for example in Isaiah 60:19 and Jeremiah 33:9).

MacArthur: The *glories to follow*, including such truths as the resurrection ascension, and enthronement of Christ, appear in passages like Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; and Zech. 2:10-13; 14:16-17.

b) *Serving (1:12a)*

¹²*It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you...*

Helm: The encouragement Peter has already given them would only continue to swell as they read the opening line of verse 12.... These words did more for Peter’s early readers than we can possibly imagine.... For Peter had shown them that the prophets were the true outsiders, not themselves. The prophets of the past were the ones kept from seeing salvation’s fullness. The prophets had been relegated to serving God by serving a distant generation rather than their own. In fact, for the most part the prophets outdid them all in having to endure rejection and loss.... Such is the reward of the prophet. They were largely rejected in their own day. They served another time. They couldn’t understand salvation as clearly as they desired. And they were often physically impaired due to the nature of their work. Peter’s first readers would have been deeply humbled by this fresh consideration of salvation’s past glories. The extent that God went to in securing their salvation was borne with a cost, not only to Himself, not only to His Son—it cost the prophets as well. It should humble us too. We know nothing of this kind of suffering,

Gardner: Peter’s comments here give us a deeper understanding of how much the prophets did and did not know. They searched intently about things that were not to be revealed until after Christ was born, lived, suffered, died, and was raised and exalted. But one thing that *was revealed to them* by the Spirit of Christ was that they were speaking God’s grace and salvation to future generations, to *you*.... It is the same *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of Christ, who inspired the Old Testament prophets and who sent preachers of the good news of salvation to the villages and towns in ancient Turkey.

MacArthur: The Spirit also made it clear that the prophets’ searching would never be fully satisfied because the complete gospel message could not be revealed during that time. Peter indicated this reality when he wrote: *it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves*.

McKnight: No matter how intense their search or profound their vision, Peter insists that these prophets, like John the Baptist after them, only served a preliminary role in the plan of God. They were preparing the world and God’s people for a later time—and that later time is now (cp.

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2:10, 21, 24, 25; 3:6, 9) for Peter. This is the great privilege of the church age: the enjoyment of the inauguration of God's salvation in Christ.

6. The Apostles (1:12b)

...in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...

Gardner: Peter is almost certainly thinking of the Day of Pentecost when he says the Spirit was *sent from heaven*. On that day he himself delivered a major sermon (Acts 2) in which he showed how many prophecies were fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

MacArthur: The Holy Spirit inspired not only the Old Testament prophets, but also the New Testament apostles, who took the fully revealed gospel as the theme of their preaching. *These things* again refers to the salvation grace that was to come, specifically to the person of Christ and the present proclamation of the gospel.... In addition to Peter, *those who preached the gospel* included the remainder of the Twelve, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Philip, James the half-brother of Jesus, Jude the half-brother of Jesus, Stephen, and others unnamed. Not all were apostles of Christ in the same sense as Paul and the Twelve (they had not all seen the risen Lord), but they were sent by the church as messengers of the gospel empowered by the *Holy Spirit sent from heaven*.

Helm: Did you catch how Peter builds upon the prophets? He introduces for the first time those who preached the gospel to early readers. He wants them to know that God sent more than Spirit-filled prophets to them. He sent preachers too. Never again could these churches wander off into dejection without having the Word of God in their midst to shore them up during difficult days. God had sent prophets to them. God sent preachers too. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Peter is proving God's love for them.

7. The Angels (1:12c)

...things into which angels long to look.

Gardner: Peter ends this section with a reference to angels, because angels have also been involved in serving the cause of the gospel on behalf of the Lord, as Hebrews 1:13 makes clear.... So wonderful is the gospel's display of God's amazing grace towards His people that *even angels long to look into these things*. They too, as did the prophets, long to see how all of God's plans will be finally realized.

McKnight: It is so great that even angels are looking down to gain a view, like wedding attendees attempting to steal a glimpse at the bride before her appearance. The angels are brought in here, not to invite us to speculate about their activities, but to press on our minds the privileges of salvation; neither the prophets nor the angels experience what the church assumes and enjoys.

Helm: Because he cannot contain himself, Peter throws a third encouraging word to his readers about salvation's past glories. Not only did God put prophets and preachers to work for them, but he did so with a message so great that it had the angelic host standing at rapt attention as they watched it unfold.

MacArthur: Believers wonder what the angels know and experience in the spiritual and invisible realm.... Christians desire to have eternal holiness and experience glory and fellowship with the Trinity as the elect angels do. But conversely the angels wonder what it is like to

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experience the grace and glory of salvation and God’s forgiveness from sin. In fact, Peter says, they are continually looking with fascination into salvation’s greatness.... ‘Long’ translates *epithumousin*, which describes having a strong desire or overpowering impulse that is not easily satisfied. The term indicates that the angels’ interest in salvation is not merely whimsical or an incidental curiosity but a strong passion with them. ‘Look’ (*parakupsai*) literally means to stretch one’s head forward or to bend down (cp. Jn. 20:5)... The angels, as it were, want to get down close and look deeply into the matters related to salvation. They have a holy curiosity to understand the kind of grace they will never experience. The holy angels do not need to be saved, and the fallen angels cannot be saved. But the holy ones seek to understand salvation so that they might glorify God more fully, which is their primary reason for existence (Job. 38:87; Ps. 148:2; Is. 6:3; Lk. 2:13-14; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:11-12; 7:11-12; cp. Neh. 9:6; Phil. 2:9-11).

Helm: These are three encouraging truths: 1) prophets labored their entire lives to present the true gospel to us; 2) preachers have traveled around the globe to ensure that it has gained a hearing before us; and 3) angels would like nothing better than to gaze into what God has done for us.... This is amazing love. Ancient prophets, itinerant preachers, and exalted angels have for ages stood in service to this salvation that has come to us! The fullness of your salvation has been the joyful business of God’s servants over the centuries. Knowing this, I hope you have a surge of spiritual fortitude to remain faithful wherever God has placed you.

D. Salvation’s Current Reality

8. Summary

Gardner: In verses 3-12, Peter has been writing of God’s grand salvation and of the great power and wonder of His mercy and grace brought to us through Jesus Christ. One idea after another has flowed from his pen as he has contemplated the wonder of the new birth, the living hope, and the inheritance that belongs to God’s people. God’s powerful action in saving His people from judgment is not over because He continues to shield them through the trials and sufferings of this age until the time comes for His full salvation to be revealed when Christ appears. These trials are not simply arbitrary. They refine Christians who, at the last day, will find themselves receiving praise and honor. Though this life is lived with the eyes of faith, for we do not see Jesus yet, we still love Him and believe in Him and are filled with joy at the thought of the final outcome of the salvation that is ours. So extraordinary are the works of our God in bringing about the salvation of His people that even the prophets of old longed to understand things better as they spoke about it. Even the angels long to understand all this more deeply. Truly God’s plan of salvation leaves us all in awe of our gracious God.

Doriani: The first sentences of 1 Peter introduce us to his essential themes. Christians are God’s elect, yet strangers in the world. Because we are outsiders, Peter knows we will face trouble.... It can grieve us when we realize that we will never exactly fit in our world. Peter counters this sobering reality with God’s promises and a call to claim them. Through Christ we have life, and no force from without or within can destroy it. Even when we face trials, we take heart because they demonstrate that our allegiance to God is genuine, especially when we persevere through them.

Doriani: It is interesting that Peter mentions the cardinal Christian virtues in our passage. He says that our new birth gives us a living *hope* (1:3), that we receive God’s protection through *faith* (1:5), and that we *love* Jesus even if we have not seen Him (1:8). Still, as important as our

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hope, love, and faith may be, our attention stays with Jesus. He has conquered death, He protects us, and nothing can rob us of joy now or keep us from sharing His glory when He returns.

9. Application

Gardner: Peter wants Christians to set their face firmly to the future. He will speak much about how they should live in this age and how they will suffer in it, but all this is set in a specific context of the salvation hope, inheritance, and glory that is promised to them in the future.... Peter maintains a careful balance that we too should always seek to maintain. We are to live for the Lord *now*, but we do so *in light of the future*. The future becomes one of many motivations to live for the Lord in the present, but it also provides the context for any suffering we may have to face now. As we continue with the hard work of living for Christ in a world that reacts negatively to us, it is vital we understand that the future holds something far more wonderful.

Gardner: *First*, Christians will surely come to understand that suffering truly has its place in God's economy. We shall be better prepared to counter the growing influence of the prosperity gospel heresies which suggest that God always intends for us to be smiling and enjoying a great, healthy, and wealthy life. Instead of being led astray, as so many are, by the false prophets of ease and prosperity giving this generation what 'their itching ears want to hear' (2 Tim. 4:13), we shall be challenged to *expect* suffering for our faith.

Doriani: If you suffer trials, take heart; God is guarding your inheritance. Many trials come from the outside, when people wrong us or when disease and disaster wound us. Other trials come from within—self-doubt, irrational fear, loss of passion. Trials are fiery, and we should never pretend otherwise. They hurt, sometimes so badly that despair assails us. But Peter encourages us that we can rejoice as trials prove our faith is real. All things lead to praise when Jesus is revealed and completes His salvation. That coming salvation transforms our present experience, offering us hope even in the worst of times.

Gardner: *Secondly*, as we face suffering in the light of this glorious future, perhaps we shall be better able to take our eyes off ourselves and see the Lord Himself and remember how He suffered for us before entering into His glory. Enduring suffering is never easy, whatever its cause, but with the vision of glory before us, and with God's shielding power at work through His Spirit, at least it can be seen as having purpose and leading to a goal.

Gardner: *Thirdly*, learning about the refining nature of suffering will lead us to look for areas of spiritual growth in our lives that are being achieved, in the Lord's providence *through* the suffering. In retrospect, we shall be able to see Christian maturity through the refining that God has performed in us.

For next time: Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.

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Lesson Summary

II. Our Eternal Inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-12)

Aim: To rejoice in all aspects of our salvation, past, present, and future.

A. Salvation's Future Glory (1:3-5)

1. Blessed (1:3a) *eulogētos*

- Doxology of praise, not pronouncement of blessing
- God is the Father of Jesus – speaks of relationship, not creation; *monogenēs*
- Christ = Messiah/King; Jesus = Son/Savior; Lord = Sovereign Ruler; 'our'

2. Regeneration (1:3b) a 'chain reaction of ideas'

- Great Mercy (*hesed*); Ex. 20:6; Eph. 2:1-3
- Born Again (*anagennaō*); regeneration comes from God; Jn. 3:1-10
- Living Hope – hope is future certainty
- Resurrection of Jesus is the basis for our living hope

3. Inheritance (1:4) (*klēronomia*)

- Based on a family relationship; we are adopted by God
- Imperishable (*aphtharton*); not corruptible/liable to death/subject to destruction
- undefiled (*amianton*); things that are unstained or unpolluted
- Unfading (*amaranton*); not subject to decay
- 'untouched by death, unstained by evil, unimpaired by time'
- Kept/Reserved in heaven; (*tetērēmenēn*) means 'guarded' or 'watched over'

4. Security (1:5)

- God's power shields/guards/protects Christians; the same power that keeps our inheritance safe for us, protects us so we can receive that inheritance; it doesn't depend on us
- Salvation (*sōtērian*) refers to our future, final deliverance from sin in heaven
- Revealed at the last time – refers to the return of Christ

B. Salvation's Present Story (1:6-9)

1. The Response of Joy (1:6a)

- Greatly Rejoice (from *agalliaō*); rejoice in our salvation (despite trials)

2. The Reality of Trials (1:6b-7)

- Trials are transitory, necessary, painful, and varied (*poikilos*, 'multi-colored')
- Purpose of trials: prove your faith is genuine/real (*dokimion*, 'proof by assay')
- Faith is precious, more precious than gold
- Praise, glory, and honor will be given saints with true faith by God at the apocalypse

3. The Result of Faith (1:8-9)

- Love (*agapate*) and belief in Christ, even though we have not yet seen Him
- Joy inexpressible (*aneklalētō*) and full of glory (*doxazō*)
- Goal of faith is the salvation of our souls (*psuchē*)

C. Salvation's Past Study (1:10-12)

1. The Prophets (1:10-11a)

- Salvation (the grace to be ours) is the theme of Scripture
- The OT prophets didn't fully understand their prophecies but longed to

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- They *searched intently* (*ekzeteō*, ‘seeking out and searching’) *with the greatest care* (*exeraunaō*, ‘inquiring carefully’)
2. The Spirit (1:11b-12a)
 - The Spirit gave them their prophecies and empowered their inquiries
 - Sufferings of Christ, e.g., Ps. 22:1-31; Is. 52:13-53:12; Dan. 9:24-26; and Zech. 12:10; 13:7
 - Subsequent Glories, e.g., Psalm 24:7-10; Isaiah 59:19; 60:1-2; and Ezekiel 34:23-24; Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; and Zech. 2:10-13; 14:16-17
 - The prophets were commissioned by the Spirit to serve not themselves, but us!
 3. The Apostles (1:12b)
 - Apostles and other preachers in the Holy Spirit built upon the work of the prophets
 4. The Angels (1:12c) also long to understand the greatness of God’s salvation

1:3-5: Peter starts the body of his epistle with doxology, praise to God. This praise is based on the exceeding greatness of the salvation of God, which has past, present, and future significance for the believer. Although our salvation (justification) may be in our past, our present lives (sanctification) must be lived, not only in the momentary affliction of trials, but with our hope firmly fixed on our final deliverance (glorification) when the fullness of our salvation is revealed at the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Peter describes our salvation as rebirth or regeneration, which leads us to a living hope, based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that has secured for us an eternal inheritance, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Our inheritance is reserved in heaven for us, who are shielded by God’s power until the time we enter into our future glory.

1:6-9: This is a cause for great rejoicing, even though we suffer through many different trials in this present life. Those trials are necessary, because they improve/perfect our faith, demonstrating its genuineness. God considers our true faith to be extremely precious, and will reward us once we get to heaven. This should provide us additional motivation to love Him, believe in His gospel, and rejoice with joy inexpressible, since the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls, is assured.

1:10-12: The salvation of God through Jesus Christ is the theme of Scripture and was announced beforehand by the prophets and later by the apostles, both through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Amazingly, the prophets did not fully comprehend what they were prophesying, diligently studying their own and other prophecies in an attempt to better understand the sufferings of the Messiah and the subsequent glories that would come. Indeed, even the angels, who are not subject to redemption, look into the great salvation that Jesus has provided to His elect. In light of this wonderful exposition of the common salvation we share, let us respond in faith, hope, love, and joy.