

1 Peter 1:10-12

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Introduction:

How important to you is your salvation? Something you think about every day, or just something that passes through your mind every now and then.

The other question we need to ask ourselves is “How often do we study God’s word?” How many times have you heard people say “I don’t understand the bible.” Certainly within my own life where I have said that. At other times I have been through patches where I have thought “Why bother to read the Bible. It doesn’t make any difference to my life anyway. It’s just too much of a mission.” And yet at other times there is a deep longing for a deeper walk with God and yet it seems that nothing I do makes any difference.

Context:

Peter has been telling us about the glorious things that God has done for us and how our love for him, despite of and as a result of all our trials, results in us being filled with a glorious and inexpressible joy, because we are receiving the goal of our faith - the salvation of our souls. This salvation, the plan of God through eternity, is something which the prophets longed for and something which even the angels in heaven long to look into. This alone should give us some idea of the importance of this topic, if some of the wisest of men longed to know more about it.

Doctrine:

The study of the Scriptures, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is a great and glorious task that should be in the forefront of our time for it tells us about our salvation, which should be in the forefront of our priorities.

Explanation:

Peter now starts to tell us some things concerning this salvation, this plan of God, and the first thing he tells us that is that it is something the prophets investigated carefully. Here we have men of God, who were given direct revelations from God, search intently and with the greatest care into this whole plan of God. This should immediately tell us something about the importance of this topic. The question we need to ask ourselves is what means where they using. Certainly they had the Holy Spirit with them. The text tells us as much. But this is not some mystical experience. Notice though that the Holy Spirit was only pointing them in the right direction. God still expected them to do their bit. They had the writings of Moses and for the later prophets, the writings of the earlier prophets. And it was in these that they searched diligently and with the greatest care. The idea given here is of miners, searching the depths of the earth for the hidden ore. We need to be miners of the Word. As Jesus himself told the two men on the road to Emmaus, the whole of the Old Testament, from Moses right through all the Prophets, they told about himself (**Luke 24²⁷**). The prophets understood this and so they study the Scriptures carefully, prayerfully and meditatively. They longed to see the time of Christ and they wanted to know whether it was going to come in their lifetime or not, so they searched. They wanted to



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know when the Christ would appear. They wanted to know how he would come and what would be the circumstances surrounding his coming. And so they looked to God and the Holy Spirit for guidance. We have far more than they did. We have both their writings and the writings of the apostles. As a result we have a greater understanding and a greater knowledge of what God has done for us than they did. That is our privilege. But with that privilege comes also a greater responsibility. We have a clearer message. We have the good news in all its glory. What are we doing with it? The gospel dispensation outshines all the others.

But what was it that the Holy Spirit was predicting through these prophets? In two phrases Peter outlines the gospel - "The sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." This is the essence of the gospel, the core if you like.

The sufferings of Christ. Without Christ coming down to die for us, there would be no salvation. As Peter tells us further on in this letter, Christ was chosen from before the creation of the world to be our sacrifice, our Passover lamb, that we might not die, but might have eternal life (**1 Peter 1^{19,20}**). If Christ had not come then there would be no hope for us. We would still be sinners, but sinners that could only look forward to an eternity in hell, which is a frightening thought. The problem is we have heard the gospel so many times that much of its impact is lost on us. We have become blasé about the whole thing. Look at **Isaiah 53**.

And the glories that would follow. Christ, risen, reigning in power, seated at the right hand of God Almighty. Salvation to all those chosen of God. A hope which should fill us with an inexpressible and glorious joy. An inheritance kept in heaven for us. The prospect of spending eternity in God's presence. People will work all their lives, or even kill and murder for treasures here on earth that are worth a tiny fraction of what is promised the believer. Why then do take so little notice of the gospel? Christ had to die to get us all this. Why then do we value it so little? Look at **Isaiah 9, Isaiah 65¹⁷⁻¹⁹, 66²²⁻²⁴**.

This was the sad thing about the Pharisees and Sadducees. They had and thought they knew the whole of the Old Testament, but in fact they were blind to the true meaning of what they were reading.

The incredible thing about all this is that the prophets were not serving themselves and they knew it. They were serving us. They went to all the trouble of writing things down and search and studying intently so that we might know Christ better. They spoke of the gospel. Isaiah particularly has been called the evangelical prophet because his writings contain the gospel in its clearest form. He may not have understood all that he wrote, but he knew he was writing it for you. They spoke of the things that have been told to you. Note though who it is who told you the things of the gospel. Not the preacher, not friends, but the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. I can preach until I am blue in the face, but unless the Holy Spirit takes what I am preaching and applies it to your life, I have laboured in vain. That is why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives. As Paul tells us, the word of God is foolishness to those that perishing, but to us, it is the word of life (**1 Corinthians 1²³**). And how does the Holy Spirit speak to us? Through the Scriptures. We do not invent the message. We read the Scriptures, study it and try to apply it to your life. That is what we preach. And it is that the Holy Spirit uses to speak to you.

It is not only the prophets though that longed to look into these things. Even the angels in heaven long to look into them. Even though they are in the presence of God, the eternal plan of salvation that God has wrought is so amazing to them that they long to know more, they are eager to serve to see it fulfilled. Isn't that amazing. You have in your hands something the



prophets would have loved to have and even the angels long to look more deeply into the things explained in those pages.

Concerning this salvation ... No wonder Paul can break into his doxology in Romans. "*Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen.*" (**Romans 11**³³⁻³⁶).

Application:

So, you might say, its all very well knowing that they wrote for me, but what does it really mean for me. Well, there are many things we can learn from this passage which are of practical use to us today.

- Let us note that even the holiest of men sometimes have their requests denied. The prophets longed to see the times of Christ, but they never did. We may long for Christ to return, but it may not be within our lifetime. And even in smaller things, no is still an answer.
- Like the prophets, we should be working to be useful to others rather than just ourselves. The prophets knew they were serving you and not themselves. That is their honour and it should be our practice. As Paul tells us in **Romans 14**⁷ "*For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.*" "No man is an island" is a more colloquial phrase.
- We need to pray that the Holy Spirit would be with us and help us. Unless the Holy Spirit is with us, we labour in vain, even in our own daily devotions. Which brings us to another point.
- What is your attitude towards the preaching of the word and church in general. The church is not designed to make you feel good. The church is there to help you worship God aright and to teach you more about him. Do you prepare yourself for the preaching of the word on a Sunday. Many of the great men of God reserved Saturday night for prayer and study. They both prayed for the preacher who was preaching, that he would be anointed by the Holy Spirit and that God would soften their hearts and enable them to worship him aright and to hear and understand the word preached. They came to church expecting God to hear them and to speak to them. Do you or I?
- If Christ had to suffer before he was glorified, we can expect nothing less. The student is not above his teacher. Our lives would be much easier if we learnt that lesson. The Puritans expected the worse of life and gave God the glory when it didn't happen. We often expect the best of life and as a result get very disappointed.
- Do you long for a deeper walk with God? If the answer is yes, then I can promise you this. If you diligently search after Christ by reading his word, praying to him and meditating and studying upon what he is saying to through his word, you will find him. And the same discipline is required if we want to go deeper with him. Crisis experiences may help us in the short term, but in the long term it is the day to day work of taking up our crosses and following Christ that will bring us closer to him. **Acts 17**¹¹ is always there as a guide - "*Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*"
- Do you find the Bible confusing, or contradictory? Then read the works and the commentaries of the godly and they will help you understand. We can see further if we stand upon the shoulders of giants. And there are many shoulders we can stand upon safely who



will pitch us off into the dangerous marshes of unbelief. If you're not sure whether a book is good or bad, ask Graham or Kenny. They will be only too pleased to help you or to recommend a good book. Years ago, good books were something which even the barely literate family cherished, with the one who was literate slowly read the book aloud to the rest of the family. Now we have so many books around us we tend to ignore them all. John Brown of Haddington taught himself how to read the Greek New Testament by comparing his English version with the Greek and he was a shepherd. And why? Because he wanted to know more about the great God he worshipped and believed in.

Conclusion:

The real question boils down to this. If you are a Christian how much effort do you put into your Christianity? If your boss at work asked you to do something new, would you just put in a few quick minutes each week and hope for the best that it came out alright at the end? I vouch to say that everyone here would say "No ways. My job would be on the line!" Well here we have something of far greater importance than your job and it is being told to you be someone far greater than your boss. So then why do you spend so little time reading the Word and getting to know God better?

For those of you who are not Christians I would ask you, have you ever spent any amount of time finding out whether the Scriptures are true or not? If you have and have come to the conclusion that they are not, why are you here? If you haven't, then surely something as important as this warrants your utmost attention. And now, not tomorrow, in case tonight God demands of you your life. We are not talking about things here that have no consequences. We are talking about life and death. As Moses told the people of Israel, "*This day I call heaven and earth to witness against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.*" (**Deuteronomy 30¹⁹**).

