SAVED FOR A HOLY PURPOSE

Last week we began a study of First Peter. The Apostle Peter is writing to encourage a specific group of persecuted believers in the First Century. By the providence of God, Peter’s personal message found its way into the canon of Scripture and it has been preserved for us today. Our world in 2016 may be quite different from the world that Peter and the early Christians lived in. But we Twenty-First Century believers in Jesus Christ still need encouragement, don’t we? *[Christians are still being martyred even today]* But even in America the world out there is still evil, most people are still lost, temptations still abound, and life is still hard. So today we need to hear what Peter has to say.

What better way to encourage believers than to them of their great salvation, of the inheritance they have in Christ, of God’s amazing gift to them. I want you to think back to when you were saved. As long ago as that may seem to you now, your salvation process actually began long before that – “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). Peter spends the first half of Chapter 1 discussing the salvation process – that it involves the triune Godhead, the Father, the Spirit and the Son, as well as us human beings. God had a pre-determined plan way back when, even before the fall of mankind, and we are a part of it. Our salvation is a wonderful, miraculous thing. We learned last week that it won’t fade away, that it will never rot or deteriorate over time and that it cannot be defiled by sin. Do you want to hear the best part about your salvation? Nobody can take it away from you!

Our salvation has two aspects – it’s for the here and now, today, as well as yet future. We have a hope of what wonderful things lay ahead for us after our life here on this earth ends, when we go to be with the Lord in heaven. We believe what Paul said that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). But for us, that is yet future. We certainly have a lot to look forward to, don’t we? But for now we must deal with our present reality, that we live as Christians in a fallen world. In our lesson last week Peter talked about the various trials that we will likely face and the reason why God allows them in our life, which is, to prove our faith, to test the genuineness of our faith, to show that we are truly saved. And that’s really important – to know for certain that we are truly saved.

The amazing story of our salvation is one which we can look back on and see how it was all accomplished (by Jesus Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection and His ascension back to the Father). All that happened long before we came along. What an advantage we have over the Old Testament prophets and saints who studied their scriptures diligently and looked forward to a coming Messiah that would make all things right. But they didn’t know when that would take place or who the Messiah would be. It was a mystery to them, yet it is clear to us. Our salvation is even so awesome that the angels, God’s ministering spirits, who have been around since the creation of the world, sometimes even bringing the good news of salvation, who have witnessed God changing lives of millions of people over the centuries, they want to know more about it. They long to know more about what they have seen but which they have never nor will they ever experience for themselves.

The second half of Chapter 1, which we will look at today, builds on all that we learned in the first half. We know that because of the way verse 13 starts… “Therefore…” Because of this great salvation you have, because of God’s amazing grace to you, because of all that you have to look forward to someday, things that even the angels long to look into. Because of all that, there is a response that you and I as believers in Christ must make. We’re not just sitting around waiting to die, waiting to claim our inheritance. No, there is an action we need to take now. So let’s see what that is…

READ 1 Peter 1:13-16

We need to prepare our minds for action, be sober-minded. So what does that mean? We need to be spiritually steadfast, exercise self-control, have clarity of mind (clean out the clutter of life’s circumstances and worldly thoughts), get our priorities right, have a well-disciplined and balanced life, not carried away by the enticements of this world. This involves spiritual discipline. It’s a call to take action which is why the KJV uses the phrase, “gird up the loins of your mind.” Ready for action! Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.”

This will allow you to live in hope (v 13), be obedient (v 14) and pursue holiness (v 15-16). What does it mean to be holy? It means to be set apart for God, for His purposes. We are to be God’s ambassadors, representatives and to show God to the world. What does holiness look like, practically? Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” Ephesians 5:1-2 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

This is not easy, is it? No, that’s why it involves discipline. Living like this will go against the grain of the world. Verse 14 says, “Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance (the way you lived before you were saved).” Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” So this is a process. It starts with a mindset, a resolve, a determination, and involves spiritual discipline, a daily walk with God. There is a pattern to the Christian life that God wants us to follow and our example, our pattern is, of course, Jesus.

READ 1 Peter 1:17-19

“Fear” means to reverence, to respect and to honor. Honor Him. We fear God during this time of our exile, here in this life, before we go home to be with the Lord. God is our Father through our relationship with Jesus Christ. God is also our Judge and one day we will be held accountable for what we did with what we were given.

Well, that’s verse 17. But by adding in verses 18 and 19 Peter introduces a whole new dimension to why we revere, respect and honor God. And it goes back to our salvation. It’s because of what He did for us. In Peter’s day slaves were routinely bought and sold with silver and gold. Likewise, we have been ransomed, redeemed, bought with a price. But it wasn’t with silver or gold, but with something much more precious – the blood of Jesus Christ. He paid the price required to save us. Created by God, then lost in our sin, wandering aimlessly like lost sheep, separated from God, then, by God’s grace bought back with the blood of Jesus. In Mark 10:45 Jesus put it this way: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” That’s why He came. To save us. Like the Passover lamb in Exodus 12, Jesus was our substitute. He died in our place. Remember John the Baptist in our study of the Gospel of John? He looked at Jesus when He came to the Jordan River to be baptized and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

READ 1 Peter 1:20-21

Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins was not God’s Plan B to undo the fall of man. No, this was always God’s plan. Jesus was foreknown before the foundation of the world. He was predestined before creation, in eternity past, to become flesh and blood and to pay the ransom for our sins on the cross. Jesus has always been Plan A though it was only “made manifest” (we became aware of it) “in the last times” (much later in history). And because of what Jesus did we can have this great salvation that Peter’s writing about.

God’s plan involved not only Jesus’ death on the cross (“the precious blood of Christ,” v 19) but also His resurrection and ascension back to glory (v 21). Why did God do all of this? Because He loves us. It was for our sakes. Was God obligated to send Jesus to die for our sins and to save us from hell? No. He was not obligated but He was motivated by love to do so. So, because of what He did for us, we should be motivated by our love for Him to live holy lives pleasing to Him and bringing Him glory.

READ 1 Peter 1:22-23

We are to love one another, our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Peter is passing along something he had heard before, from Jesus. In John 13:34-35 Jesus taught His disciples: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Woven into the fabric of our salvation are these various threads: our fear of God, our obedience, holy living, our love for our brothers.

READ 1 Peter 1:24-25

Peter quotes from Isaiah 40. We’re here today and gone tomorrow. We will all pass away just like grass or flowers. [example of roses I bought my wife for our anniversary, grass that died in the July heat]

Fifteen years ago today on 9-11-2001 we were reminded vividly of just how fragile our lives are. But there is something that will last forever. It’s not our legacy or even our memory. The fact is that 100 years from now nobody will even remember that we existed. So what is it that remains forever?

[hold up the Bible] The word of the Lord.

When you got saved it was because of the gospel message that you heard from a faithful messenger, perhaps a preacher, or a friend, or a parent. And their words came from the Bible. The word of the Lord is the seed, it is the means by which God produces eternal life.

Those beautiful roses or that nice green lawn we enjoy today, exquisite as they are, will fade away and eventually wither or die, even if we water them daily. But our great salvation, our new birth in Christ will never die. It will last forever.

Words of encouragement to us today who so desperately need to hear some good news. *[no apologies for my convictions]*