

1 Peter 1:8-12 'The Goal Of Our Faith. And The Longing Of The Prophets And Angels!'

Last week in 1 Peter we looked at v5-7 of chapter one in a sermon I called 'Our Shield Faith And Glory.' We saw that "through faith" (v5) "we are shielded by God's power," and I explained that we only need a shield or to be shielded by another if we are in the battle and the enemy is all around. I also explained that Peter used this powerful reassuring language in the first few verses of this letter because the days were dark and deadly! To claim Jesus, for the Jew or the non-Jew, meant to in effect leave all behind. Ways of worship, family, friends and financial security for many of them. With an ever present danger of physical harm and even death for their faith. So being told that they were "shielded by God's power" meant tremendous comfort for the believer. Yes friends, God Himself is "our shield and our defender."

Next we looked at the concept of faith. I said that unlike the empty-headed idea of the pagans, (who say that the cosmos will respond in good toward them if they put enough good out there), faith for the believer in Jesus is eternally different. And though even some Christians espouse that it is the amount of faith which we possess that matters, (i.e. have enough faith and you will even be healthy, wealthy and wise), the biblical reality is that it is not the amount of our faith that is important, because it can "even be as small as a mustard seed", Jesus said. No, not the amount of our faith, but the power and authority of that One who in whom we have our faith. That is what is all important!

And finally we saw that our life's trials are preparing us for glory. Even our whole life of trials, Peter calls them "for a little while." Not making light of them but explaining that in the scheme of eternity, they are but "a little while." And v7 through such things God is refining our faith. Testing us to see whether or not our faith is genuine. And also through those things, He is preparing us for the glory that awaits us!

This is where we pick up the letter this morning. 1 Peter 1:8-12 'The Goal Of Our Faith. And The Longing Of Prophets And Angels!' In v8-9 Peter continues. "Though you have not seen him, you know him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible joy for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the Salvation of your souls."

Beloved, can you see? Unlike that empty-headed, worldly notion of faith, that shoots out arrows of good wishes and thoughts out into the cosmos, (like those people hoping to find life on some other planet or in some other Galaxy, while at the same time calling a child in its mother's womb not a child or a human being but a foetus), yes unlike those people who do not believe in an Omnipotent God but cosmic chance: *the faith of the believer in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit has a goal*. It has a purpose. The Salvation of our souls! If you have ever wondered about the question of the meaning of this life, here it is. Faith in this God, who protects us and prepares us for eternity!

And notice that in v9 Peter says, "that you are receiving the goal of your faith." As I said some weeks ago, we are saved by grace through Jesus' Blood once and for all. We do not need to be saved over and over and over again. No, the Blood of Jesus covers us and washes us clean once and for all time.

But there is the sense to which we are in the process of "*being saved*", because we are not in heaven yet and our crowns of glory still await us! Remember v4 "though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." But our faith, like this life, has a goal and a purpose. And it is preparation for glory with God. Yes we "are receiving the goal of our faith." It may not feel that way

or seem like that at times, as circumstances almost squeeze the life out of our faith, but each moment of each day that passes, heaven comes closer to us! Friends, those hardships “griefs and trials” which you are enduring and may well continue to endure, you need to remember are bringing you nearer each day to glory and to God. Hallelujah. Thank you Jesus we cry! Yes “for you are receiving the goal of your faith the Salvation of your souls.”

Beloved, wouldn't it be awesome if we were able to lay hold of this truth in the midst of our troubles. To not have to carry that heavy burden alone. Well here it is before us. The way we do this is through prayer. To acknowledge that by God's grace “we are receiving the goal of our faith.” We “are receiving it.” And if we are receiving it, God is not going to partially give it to us and then decide to take it back from us, To even change His mind, no.

In John 14:2-3 we read “in my father's house are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you. I'm going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me where I am.” No the Lord Jesus doesn't hold out the room with the view to us in heaven, and having put our name on the door, take our place in heaven from us. Remember v4: “we have an inheritance that had never perish, spoil or fade. Kept in heaven for you.” Yes guarded in heaven by the Lord Jesus Himself!

Again, Peter's goal, is to get us to keep looking up. Helping us to keep our eyes and minds upon the prize. Because for the believer in Jesus, this time of suffering and trial, is but “a little while.”

Brothers and sisters, in v8, we have a wonderful description of what true faith is. “Though you have not seen him you know him, and even though you did not see him now you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible joy.” Do you remember Jesus' words to Thomas in John 20:24-29 “Now Thomas called Didymus, one of the 12, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord”. But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you”. Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe”. Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God”. Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

Yes “blessed is he who believes without seeing.” “Though you have not seen him you love him, and even though you do not see him now you believe in him.” But what does this really mean? How can we love someone that we've never seen? As I explained some weeks ago, toward God, our love for Him is expressed in obedience toward His Son Jesus. Matthew 28:20 “and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you,” Jesus said.

Let me give you some other examples of loving without seeing. Even loving without knowing. A child in its mother's womb. Does she not love it and nurture it and care for it in the best way that she can? Though she is never seen her baby? Our prayers and gifts to the staff and students of the blind school, are they not love? Our prayers and finances to the family in Pakistan, who we set free from the tyranny and slavery of the brick kilns, were they not also acts of love? Yes these are acts of love dear friends. As we all know, true love isn't about talking, it's about doing. Yes true love acts!

“Though we've not seen him we love him”, and why? Because He loved us first! Romans 5-8 “but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: For while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” No friends, love doesn't only speak, love does. “For greater love hath no man than this: that he lay down his life for his friends.” Yes true love is a demonstration. Because talk is cheap. True love costs us

something! "Though you have not seen him you love him, and even though you do not see him now you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible joy." If we didn't "believe in Him" we couldn't love Him, we couldn't act out of love for Him, and in obedience to Him. So our faith in God, (our belief in Him and our love for Him), is "demonstrated" in our acts of obedience toward His Son, as we've seen before.

And this "inexpressible joy" which Peter speaks of here, is that knowledge which is placed within our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we are indeed, "receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls!" No words cannot express this brothers and sisters. And the reality of these words can be so overwhelming at times. Friends, have you ever felt that way? Do you ever just feel blown away by what God has done for you through Jesus? Beloved, the reality of this you couldn't put into words. That the very Son of God "through whom all things were made," would lay down His life for you. It is inexpressible. Because it is inexplicable. Why me Lord? I'm not worth it. Why not him or her or them? They are better people than me.

Brethren, there is only one answer to these questions. And it is simply this. Because in His Mercy, it please God to do so! Yes in this truth there is "inexpressible joy." No, words cannot fully express what such truths do to our souls. We should be speechless. Praise God! "For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

V10 "concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing, when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Concerning this salvation." Now what is Peter saying here? Well he is speaking of that salvation which had been brought about in their particular time. John Calvin explains that when Peter uses the word "salvation" here, he means all of those things which have been brought about and fulfilled with the coming of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, we need to realise that all of us who are living today, (and indeed everyone who has lived and died since the coming of Jesus), live and have lived, in a tremendously privileged time. Think of it, those very Prophets themselves who spoke with the very breath of the Holy Spirit 2 Timothy 3:16 "for all scripture is God breathed." Yes the Prophets themselves who spoke with the very breath of God through the Holy Spirit as he breathed those words into them of which He would foretell, "searched intently" to know of the time when the wonders of which they spoke would be fulfilled in the promised Messiah!

Jesus Himself affirms this in Matthew 13:16-17 "but blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and kings long to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it." Do you understand what Jesus is saying here? That we should not take for granted the tremendous privilege that we have received, to have been born since the Great Light of the King Himself, to which all of those lesser lights and inspired writers of His Word have pointed!

Now we should not take for granted to be living in the age since the great light of Christ's coming. And why? Because the prophets themselves searched intently to try and find out these very things for themselves. That they might know even more fully the plan and the purpose and the person of God even beyond that which had been revealed to themselves in their own times. And again even though they themselves spoke the very word of God. So what was it that they did these prophets, those mouth pieces of God yes those heralds those trumpet Sounders? They studied the scriptures.

Again brothers and sisters, think about it. How important is Bible study if we would know the plan the purpose and the person of God? If the prophets themselves through whom the Holy Spirit spoke felt the need and had the burning desire to study the scriptures so as to reinforce their own relationship with God, how much more then is it crucial for us to do the same?

Beloved, I've said it many times over the years, Bible study is not for the Super spiritual or the theological Giants. And it is also not merely some kind of intellectual exercise or talkfest. It is simply for us, like those prophets, to know the person the plan and the purpose of God better. It is that building of our own relationship with him. So we also had to search intently, as did the Bereans as recorded in Acts 17:11: "Now the Bereans were of a more Noble character than the Thessalonians for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures everyday to see if what Paul said was true". So we to are to pore over the scriptures daily, to examine what those who preach to us is also true. We do not place our Salvation into the hands of anyone except the hands of Jesus. Yes they searched intently and with the greatest care.

And let's be reminded here, that they didn't have the chapters and verses divided up for them. When it came to Genesis, 50 chapters of writings to search through. In Exodus, 40 chapters. In Job, 42 chapters. In Ezekiel, 48 chapters. In Jeremiah, 52 chapters. And in Isaiah, 66 chapters. None of these had reference points. They had to search intently and with the greatest care. No electronic devices, no electric lights, no commentaries. Only candlelight and oil lamps, with many scrolls to pour over and over and over again. Now I don't know about you, but when I read these things this was for me a great rebuke and a challenge for me to lift my game.

Friends we shouldn't think that Bible studies are a chore: they are a tremendous privilege. Verse 11: "Trying to find the time and circumstances to which the spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Again I think of the image of those men poring over those ancient scrolls, because they wanted to know more of their maker and his plan.

And Calvin instructs us here to take heed of the order in which Peter places these. The Holy Spirit in the prophets predicted first the sufferings of Christ and then the glories that would follow. This is interesting, because you would think that amidst all of their studies of the Old Testament scriptures the religious elite of the day would have put it all together. But they didn't. The Messiah was not going to be a conqueror of Israel's enemies and oppressors. Now he would come as God's suffering servant. Or in other words, first there must be the cross and then the Crown. Isaiah 53: "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or Majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows? Yet we considered him smitten by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgement he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living, for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and caused him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt

offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he would divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. But he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”.

But why was this important for the early church tonight? Well, for the same reason that it is for you and I to know this truth. As we've seen before, John 16:33: “I've told you these things that in me you will have peace. In this world you have trouble. But take heart I have overcome the world”. Notice that it's not you *may have* trouble but *you will have* trouble.

Brethren, we like to read over such passages quickly, don't we. This trouble which Jesus speaks of we like to think is for other people not for ourselves. It's for Christians in Russia, China and Muslim countries, but not at here in Australia today. The problem is of course, is that we don't find this in Jesus words here. Now we don't like the idea of the cross. We don't like the idea of having to travel through trouble and hardship to get to the Crown. Peter himself tried to dissuade Jesus on the Lord's own journey. In Matthew 16:21 – 22: “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord”, He said. “This shall never happen to you”. Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me Satan, you are stumbling block to me, you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men”.

Yes beloved like the idea of the Crown, but we want to bypass the cross. But friends if there is no cross, there will be no Crown. And as you are all aware, more and more for the believer in Australia today, trouble abounds an increasing measure. As our nation seeks to put to death the truth about Jesus. Yes friends the believers in Peters day needed to know that the road ahead was filled with troubles. And it is no different today. Stand up for Jesus and his truth in Australia is to become the target of every politically motivated and depraved lobby group. Just ask Israel Folau. You can assault your wife, you can take drugs and get drunk, and the Australian Rugby League will take you back. But not if you have committed the unforgivable crime of preaching Christ truth.

Yes first there must be the cross, only after that, does the Crown come. Verse 12 “It was real to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven”. Peter explains that the other prophets were serving the people of their own day as they proclaim God's word, the Holy Spirit supernaturally conveyed to them that there was yet to come a more glorious day. That the things which they spoke of when looking from a distance would be fulfilled with the coming of the King. So in that sense they were serving not only the people of their own time, but all of us who have seen the King and his Kingdom come. When he not only suffered, but also had brought the bonds of death and rose into glory. And all of those faithful preachers who have come since Paul's and Peter's day, have continued to bring that same message, of which the prophets foretold.

But as I've explained we live far more privileged day than the prophets did. As the Bible commentator explains, in a sense, the Old Testament prophets prepared the table before us in the foretelling of the King. But since Jesus is come, and with our knowledge of that coming out of his sin conquering death and resurrection we get to sit down at the feast through the faithful and preaching of his word.

And finally Peter finishes this verse with this wonderful line, “even Angels long to look into these things”. So the prophets longed for the time of the Christ coming and the Angels long for the culmination of all of those things, when Jesus will come again, to gather all of his bride together at the last day.