

What A Great Salvation Our God Has Given Us  
(12 Bedrock Truths of a Christian Salvation)

1 Peter 1:1-12

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Intro. 1) It is almost certainly the most well known Christian song in the world. Its words pierce to the very heart and soul of the Christian faith. “Amazing grace!

How sweet the sound—That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.” Salvation from sin through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ and his bodily resurrection is the core, the very essence of Christianity. It is the reason Jesus came as he, himself, states so clearly in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, came from heaven to earth on a rescue mission to save you and me.

There are a number of important texts in the NT that address the theme of what the author of Hebrews calls “such a great salvation” (Heb. 2:3). They include:

- John 3:1-18                      2 Corinthians 5:14-21      Ephesians 2:1-10
- Romans 3:21-31                Galatians 4:1-7                Titus 3:4-7

and there are more to be sure. One is found in the opening words of the book known as First Peter. The book was written by the apostle Peter (1:1). He was a fisherman who lived along the Sea of Galilee. His father was named Jonah (Matt. 16:17) and he had a brother named Andrew who was also an apostle (Matt. 10:1-4). His name was originally Simon, but Jesus gave him the name Peter meaning “rock” (Mark 3:16; also Matt 16:16-18). Peter was the leader of the 12 apostles. His name always appears first in any list (Matt 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14-16). Though he denied Jesus three times on the night of his betrayal (Mark 14:66-72), he was restored by our Lord (John 21:15-19), would preach the great Pentecost sermon (Acts 2), figure

prominently in Acts 1-12, and write two letters in our NT. Church tradition says Peter was crucified upside down in Rome in latter days of the reign of the evil emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68).

Peter writes this letter from Rome (5:13; Babylon is symbolic for Rome) as conditions are getting worse for Christians across parts of the Roman empire. The time is c.A.D. 62-63. The recipients are believers (“elect exiles,” 1:1) scattered across five Roman provinces that identify with modern Turkey. The theme that rings out throughout the five chapters and 105 verses is “hope in the midst of suffering (see 4:12-13). Rejoice when you suffer for Jesus because the glory of your salvation is on the way!

Now, what better way to prepare Christians for the “fiery trials” that are on the way than to remind them of the incredible salvation they have in Jesus?! It provides a “living hope” (1:3) that will strengthen them and sustain them no matter what trials and sufferings they may face.

In 1 Peter 1:1-12 we discover 12 bedrock truths of Christian salvation. When I teach Bible interpretation and preaching, I tell my students there are different approaches we can faithfully utilize when teaching the Bible. Sometimes we ski, sometimes we swim, sometimes we snorkel and sometimes we deep sea dive! In this study we are going to ski and ski fast. Hopefully, your breath will be taken away with what J.I. Packer called “the master theme of the Christian

gospel...rescue from jeopardy and misery into a state of safety” (*Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs*).

### I. God saves us through the work of the Triune God 1:1-2

Peter is an apostle, a sent one, of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of Holy Scriptures. He has a concern for God’s people wherever they are. In this instance, his attention is upon “elect exiles of the dispersion” in five Roman provinces (1:1). The *NASB* says they are “strangers, scattered.” In 2:11 Peter says we are “strangers and exiles” (*CSB*), “sojourners and pilgrims” (*NKJV*). This world is not our home. “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). Don’t get tied down to this world! It is only temporary and it pales in comparison to where we are going.

Each member of the Triune God is highlighted in terms of our salvation. First, we are elect (chosen) according to the foreknowledge of God (cf. Eph. 1:3-6). Warren Wiersbe puts it both simple and clear: “This election was not based on anything we had done...Nor was it based on anything God saw we would be or do. God’s election was based wholly on His great grace and love. We cannot explain it (Rom. 11:33-36), but we can rejoice in it” (*Be Hopeful*, 30). That our election is grounded in God the Father’s foreknowledge does not mean God simply saw in advance we would choose Him. That would make salvation dependent on us. No, in the Bible, foreknowledge is the wonderful truth that the omniscient God has always known us and set his grace and love on us for all eternity. It is a deeply intimate and

personal knowing (see Rom. 8:28-29). Of course, it is in our experience of salvation this foreknowing becomes a reality to us. Those God foreknows will believe and those who believe are foreknown. Once again the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility are beautifully wedded for our worshipful mediation and amazement.

Peter then moves to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The word sanctification means to set apart. Sometimes it speaks of our position in Christ that takes place at salvation. Other times it addresses our progress as we grow in Christlikeness (see 1 Thess. 4:3) by the work of the Holy Spirit. Here it is positional sanctification that is in view. And, we have been set apart to God at conversion/regeneration to “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven” (1:3).

Peter says our election and sanctification is “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.” Tom Schreiner makes a connection with the covenant of Ex. 24:3-8 and helps us put together Peter’s idea. He writes, “The blood of the covenant signifies the forgiveness and cleansing the people needed to stand in right relation with God. We see, then, that entrance into the covenant has two dimensions: the obedient response to the gospel and the sprinkling of blood.... Believers enter the covenant by obeying the gospel and through the sprinkled blood of Christ, that is, his cleansing sacrifice” (*1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 56).

Our salvation is gloriously Trinitarian. The Father elects, the Spirit sanctifies and the Son cleanses. The Father initiates, the Spirit applies, and the Son accomplishes. “Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”

In light of this amazing salvation, Peter interjects a quick prayer of encouragement, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” And, given that unmerited favor and true wholeness of life flow in our direction from such a great God, we can rest assured it will come in overflowing abundance no matter what may lie ahead.

## II. God saves us through His abundant mercy 1:3

Verses 3-12 are a single sentence in the original Greek text. Having laid the foundation for our salvation in the Triune God, Peter explores the marvels of this salvation like a jeweler explores the multiple facets of a magnificent diamond. He rightly begins with a word of praise and worship!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” Why is he to be “blessed?” “Praised” (*NIV*)? Because of His mercy? No! Because of His “great mercy.” Paul tells us in Eph. 2:4 that “God is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us.” Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. Mercy is God withholding from us what we do deserve. Lamentations 3:22-23 teaches us, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” God is kind and

compassionate in the face of our sin and our deserved eternal punishment. He rightly could choose judgement. In mercy He chooses to forgive.

### III. God saves us for a living hope through the new birth 1:3

God's great mercy produces something wonderful: the new birth! The electing, sanctifying, cleansing and merciful God has brought about a new you and a new me by the new birth (see John 3:3,7). This act of "borning us again" (better "anew") is singularly his work not others. We did nothing to produce our physical birth and we do nothing to produce our spiritual birth. As John 1:13 makes crystal clear, you "were born [again] not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Further, the new birth comes with a gift(s)! Peter calls it a "living hope." The word "hope" appears five times in 1 Peter (1:3, 13, 21, 3:5, 15). Note, it is a living hope, a "confident expectation, a joyful anticipation." Vaughn and Lea provide precious insight into the reality of this dynamic and active hope we have. They write: "We tend to take hope for granted, but it is well to remind ourselves that the pagan world of apostolic times (like the pagan world of our day) was a world without hope (cf. Eph. 2:12). Unprecedented depression had settled over the masses. Life was care-ridden and full of worry. Indeed, on that hard pagan world disgust and secret loathing fell; Deep weariness and sated lust made human life a hell. —Matthew Arnold" (1, 2 Peter, Jude, *BSC*, 19).

#### IV. God saves us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ 1:3

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the bedrock foundation of Christianity. No resurrection no Christianity. It is nothing more than a mirage, a myth, a fable. Peter and Paul are at one on this cardinal and non-negotiable truth (see 1 Cor. 15:3-6). The tomb is empty, many witnesses saw Him, women witnessed Him first, and neither the Romans or the Jews could disprove the gospel proclamation: “He is risen.” Because Christ is resurrected and alive, we can be “born again.” Because Christ is resurrected and alive, we have a “living hope.” [For more on the Resurrection of Jesus see, “The Resurrection of the Great King” in Daniel L. Akin, *Mark*, CCE, pgs. 359-368.] And, there is more.

#### V. God saves us for an incorruptible inheritance in heaven 1:4

The future for the Christian is bright. In language that draws from the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, Peter tells us what Israel received from God when they entered the Promised Land was only an inkling, a foretaste, and what we receive in Christ. In fact, he gets so excited he piles up the descriptions of our future “inheritance.” He lists four. Again, Vaughn and Lea serve us well as our teachers: “1. It “can never perish.” The Greek word was occasionally used with a military connotation—of a land not ravaged by (or beyond the reach of) enemy armies. Sometimes it was used of a land unscathed by natural calamities. Likely the



language here suggest perpetuity: the Christian's heritage is imperishable, not liable to corruption or decay. In short, death cannot reach and destroy it.

2. It "can never...spoil." The idea is that it is unpolluted, unstained by evil; it is beyond the reach of evil and cannot be contaminated by it. As the first term spoke of perpetuity, this speaks of purity and perfection. The inheritance lasts forever, and forever retains its integrity.

3. It "can never...fade." That is to say, the Christian inheritance is not subject to the wasting effects of time. The root word was used of the withering of flowers, of the wasting of one's features by illness or age. The word used in the text suggests then a beauty that time does not impair or cause to wither away. It is unchanging.

4. It is "kept in heaven." This means that it is divinely preserved and therefore completely safe. The Greek word has the connotation of being watched over or guarded, and then of being preserved (protected from loss or injury). The inheritance is not simply stored safely away (the idea of a similar word used in Col. 1:5), but securely kept under God's careful watch. The readers may endure much hardship and suffering, but they can be sure that their eternal inheritance is secure, for it is in the custody of their God. His eye is ever upon it." (p. 21).

#### VI. God saves us and keeps us through faith by His power 1:5

Once more we observe the beautiful dance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Salvation is secure, sure, certain because we are guarded by

God's power. Jesus reaffirms this truth in John 10:27-30 when he says, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Salvation from beginning to end is the work of God. He is the "author and finisher of faith" (Heb.12:2). However, we are not passive bystanders. We too are involved. We are not robots, "mere automatons" (Schreiner, 64). We persevere in faith, giving evidence of the genuineness of our faith. As the witty N.C. evangelist Vance Havner quipped, "Faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first." God's power protects us and persevering faith is the means by which he does this. This reminds us of an important theological truth. There is saving faith that gets us started and there is sustaining faith that keeps us going. Both are God's gift. Both involve our participation.

#### VII. God saves us for a salvation fully realized at the end of time 1:5

Christian salvation has three tenses: past, present and future. It can be depicted this way:

Past → regeneration/conversion/justification → saved from sin's penalty

Present → sanctification → being saved from sin's power

Future → glorification → saved from sin's presence.

Here, Peter is looking at salvation in the future tense, one that is ready to be revealed in the end times. There is coming a day when our salvation will be full and complete and publicly displayed for all to see. On that day we will see Jesus and be conformed to His perfect likeness (1 John 3:2). This salvation is imperishable, kept in heaven, and guarded by God. As the song so wonderfully declares, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory!”

#### VIII. God saves us to rejoice even when we have trials 1:6

Salvation from sin, Satan, self and all that is in the world is indeed cause for rejoicing. A future inheritance that is safe and secure and on the way is more than we could hope or even imagine! And yet, following Jesus is not always easy or without difficulties. Our Lord, Himself, told us that if we are a faithful disciple, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Mk. 8:34).

Peter takes an honest and fair look at the Christian life in the here and now. “For a little while, if necessary,” we may be grieved (*CSB*, “suffer”) by various trials.” The *NIV* says, “all kinds of trials.” Trials are an important part of our sanctification, our growing in likeness to Christ. They are like rigorous exercises that strengthen our spiritual muscles.

James provides similar counsel in James 1:2. Suffering trials of various sorts is going to be our experiences in life from time to time. All are providentially and

divinely allowed for our good (Rom. 8:28). William Hendriksen says it well, “The trials which the believer experience come from God’s hand. These trials, in whatever form they appear, are ordained by God” (*Peter and Jude*, NTC, 46). Indeed, they come to us from the heart and hands of our loving, grace-filled, merciful heavenly Father. They are temporary. They are for the best.

#### IX. God saves us and sends trials to test the genuineness of our faith 1:7

Peter tells us in verse 6 we can expect trials in this life in anticipation of the climax of our salvation that we will experience “in the last time.” Now, he informs us of one of the reasons God sends trials and testing into our lives: it tests the “genuineness,” “the proven character” (*CSB*), “of your faith.” Is your faith real? Trials will prove it. Do you really trust Christ? The challenges, difficulties, and trials of this life will bring it to light for all to see. Such real and authentic faith is said to be “more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire.” Even the finest gold will perish. Faith purified in the fire of trials will shine bright today and forever (see Dan. 3). Further, this true and genuine faith will have eschatological consequences. It will “result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In the end our faith, in the midst of suffering, redounds to the worship of King Jesus. No wonder the apostles in Acts 5:41 could “rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” Ours is a little pain for a little while. His is great praise forever.

X. God saves us so we can love Jesus unseen 1:8-9

In John 20, the Bible records three resurrection appearances of Jesus. The first is to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18). The second is to the disciples minus Thomas (20:19-23). The third is to all the disciples with Thomas present (20:24-29). Thomas had said, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe” (20:25). When Jesus appears to Thomas, the disciple responds with one of the greatest Christological confessions in all of the Bible, “My Lord and my God!” (20:28). Interestingly and significantly, Jesus does not praise him. He mildly rebukes him. “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29). I believe this event lays behind the beautiful parallel affirmation of Peter in verse 8.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him.”

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

As Paul writes in 2 Cor. 5:7, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” They had never seen the Savior and neither have we. However, we have a sure and certain word in apostolic, eyewitness, gospel proclamation (see 2 Peter 1:19-21). Therefore, we love Him, we believe in Him, and we rejoice in Him with “a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” We cannot explain it all, but we know it is real

and beyond what human words can say. Seeing can wait. It is on the way. The hope of a future salvation of all of me (body, soul and spirit) sustains my faith today.

Paul puts it exactly right in 2 Tim 1:12, “But I know when I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able, to keep that which I’ve committed unto Him against that Day!” (paraphrase) Oh, “blessed assurance Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.”

#### XI. God saves us through a gospel revealed to the prophets 1:10-12

The coming of the Messiah did not occur in a vacuum or spring up out of nowhere. It had been promised and prophesied for centuries. Just to highlight a few:

Gen. 3:15 → Seed of Woman

Gen. 12:1-3 → Seed of Abraham

Gen. 49:9-10 → Tribe of Judah

Deut. 18:15 → Prophet Greater Than Moses

2 Sam. 7:12-17 → Greater Davidic King

Psalms 2 → God’s King

Psalms 16 → Resurrection

Psalms 22 → Crucifixion

Psalms 23 → Good Shepherd

Psalms 110 → King/Priest

Isaiah 7:14 → Virgin Born

Isaiah 9:6-7 → King With 4 Names

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 → Suffering Servant of the Lord

Daniel 7:13-14 → Apocalyptic Son of Man

Micah 5:2 → Birthplace is Bethlehem

Zechariah 12:10 → The Son of Israel Pierced

The Promised One would be a Deliverer, a Savior, and the prophets could not take their eyes off of Him. “Concerning this salvation,” this “grace” that was to be theirs and ours, the prophets “searched and inquired carefully,” “searched intently with the greatest care” (*NIV*). Both who it was and when He would come occupied their hearts and minds. Further, “the Spirit of Christ,” the Holy Spirit, predicted the what, both “the sufferings of Christ and the glories” that would follow. Peter David says, “The prophets could speak about this time which they did not understand because it was “the Spirit of Christ” who was in them giving testimony (or witnessing).... They did know however, that their prophecy would be fulfilled in a “distant age” (*1 Peter*, NICNT, 62, 64). Peter declares to the “elect exiles,” that day has come and you are the receipts of it. Yes, “it was revealed to them” (v. 12) and in that act “they were serving not themselves but you.” They promised it and you are seeing the fulfillment of that promise. Now! Today! The promise of the Messiah is fulfilled and is now being announced to you through the preaching of the gospel. Declared “to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven” almost certainly is a reference to Acts

2 and the Day of Pentecost. The new has come. The old has been fulfilled. The gospel is now to be proclaimed to all without distinction. And yet, there is one other matter to which we must attend in v. 12.

XII. God saves us by a gospel that amazes the angels 1:12

Peter tells us the things concerning the coming of the Messiah, his sufferings and glories, the preached gospel, are “things into which angels long to look.” *The Message* with a colorful paraphrase says, “Do you realize how fortunate you are? Angels would have done anything to be in on this.” You see, the angels see all of this but they do not experience it the way we do. They are not the recipients of the grace of God and salvation the way we are. We were once lost but now found! We were blind but now we see. The angels have no such experiences. Nevertheless, they can’t take their eyes away from watching the drama of redemptive unfold day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, century after century. John Piper gets to the point: “if angels get excited about our salvation, how much more should we. If angels love to look at the work of God in saving sinners like us, how much more should we who are the very beneficiaries of that salvation (not just onlookers) love to look into it and be thankful for it and say with Peter, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (What the Prophets Sought and Angels Desire,” 11-21-93).



Con. Christian salvation truly is a many splendored thing. We will spend all of eternity reflecting on it and all it encompasses. And yet, there is a beautiful simplicity to its majesty. Martin Luther, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformer, I believe captures that simplicity in words that appropriately bring this study to a close: “Learn Christ and him crucified. Learn to praise him and, despairing of yourself, say, ‘Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given to me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not.’”(Luther, *LW*, Vol. 48, p. 12). Hallelujah! What a Savior! Hallelujah! What a Salvation!