

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 3
1 Peter 1:10-13
“The Envy of Angels”

Introduction

And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in you hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is The LORD’S Passover.
Exodus 12:11 (NKJV)

When I was young, we used to sing a song in the church entitled “*Count Your Blessings*”. We often sang this song around the time of Thanksgiving, and it served to remind us of all the good things that God had done for us. I think it is wise for Christians to be reminded from time to time of all the things that we have been given in Christ Jesus. We have been given a salvation by grace that we do not deserve. We are kept saved by that very same grace, and our inheritance secured by grace. No matter what we face in this life, God, in His lovingkindness, will see to it that all things will work together for our good. So is there any wonder why we are commanded to become ever prayerful and thankful in all things?

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Simon Peter wanted those in the church who were facing intense persecution to remember what God had done for them. He encouraged them to look upward, rather than outward, taking their focus off the stormy seas and placing it upon Christ. For no matter what this world may try and do to a Believer, God is in complete control over every circumstance. This is why the Christian can rejoice in all weather, for we know that God will fulfill all that He has promised.

Sometimes we just need to be reminded of just what we have. I recently heard of a successful football coach who raised his two sons to follow in his footsteps. Every day, no matter the circumstances that surrounded his family, he would ask his two young sons, “Who has it better than us?” And their answer was always the same, “Nobody!” What a great attitude to have! That my friends is an attitude of victorious living. No wonder both of those young men grew up to be among the winningest coaches in their profession.

Likewise, Peter wanted to remind the persecuted church that no matter what trials they were destined to face, in fact, no one had ever had it better. For the things that they had received in Christ were the envy of *The Old Testament* prophets who had only seen these things from a distance. We too must come to realize just how blessed we are in Christ, for in Him we have received such mercy and grace that the less fortunate can only dream of. Therefore, we need to develop a mindset that mirrors our eternal reality, rather than allow temporary circumstances to cloud our minds with doubt and despair.

One of my favorite “*Bible-type*” phrases is, “*and it came to pass.*” There is so much truth in those five little words. For you see, every storm that comes into our lives doesn’t come to stay, but rather, it comes to pass. And the reality of this life is that no matter what is happening in the present, all of us are either, going through a storm, coming out of a storm, or about to head into a storm. This is just the way of life in this fallen world. But no matter what your present circumstances may be, all of your storms *will come to pass*. Now, here is the message of hope:

Blessed be the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ. Because of His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.
1 Peter 1:3-4

The Old Testament prophets foresaw the blessings that we would one day receive in Christ. *The New Testament* preachers have been declaring this message of grace for two thousand years now, and even the angels of heaven are fixated upon all that God has done for us. So we must always remember just how blessed we are, keeping our eyes fixed upon the horizon, for the Promised Land is drawing near. So, with thanksgiving, let us look together at this great passage of Scripture, written by Peter, the Apostle of Hope, to see *The Prophets, The Preachers, and The Promised Land*.

Prophets (vs. 10-12a)

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who prophesied about the grace that would come to you, searched and carefully investigated. They inquired into what time or what circumstances The Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when He testified in advance to the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you. 1 Peter 10-12a

The Old Testament prophets foretell many glorious details about the coming messiah, and what He would be like. They were inspired by The Holy Spirit to write what they heard. And more often than not, the prophets themselves did not fully understand what they were writing about. For they were unable to see the fulfillment of their prophecies with their own eyes. God would allow them to see glimpses into His future plans, but the various pieces of the puzzle, as it were, were scattered throughout all the writings of *The Old Testament*. Moses spoke of a great prophet who was to come in the future:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to Him. Deuteronomy 18:15

In all, there are over three hundred *Old Testament* prophecies concerning the promised Messiah, the Anointed One of God. And each of those prophecies foretell of Jesus, His suffering and His subsequent glory and reign. But the prophets themselves had a difficult time understanding how or why God would send the Messiah to suffer, yet also conquer and rule. King David spoke of His suffering in **Psalm 22**, as did Isaiah in **Isaiah 53**. But Isaiah also spoke of His everlasting reign in **Isaiah Chapter 11**.

Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of The LORD will rest on Him — a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of The LORD. His delight will be in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what He sees with His eyes, He will not execute justice by what He hears with His ears, but He will judge the poor righteously and execute justice for the oppressed of the land. He will strike the land with a scepter from His mouth, and He will kill the wicked with a command from His lips. Righteousness will be a belt around His hips; faithfulness will be a belt around His waist. The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf will be together, and child will lead them. The cow and the bear will graze, their young ones will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like cattle. And infant will play beside the cobra's pit, and a toddler will put his hand into a snakes den. They will not harm or destroy each other on My entire holy mountain, for the land will be as full of the knowledge of The LORD as the sea is filled with water.

Isaiah 11:1-9

The prophets could not understand how these things could be reconciled, a suffering Messiah, and a conquering Messiah at the same time. Some early Rabbi's actually taught that there would be two messiahs. One who would suffer and another who would come to reign in power. They did not comprehend that instead of two messiahs, there would be two separate comings of the same Messiah! As some *Bible* teachers have explained, it was as if they looked upon two mountain peaks from a distance. The closest peak representing the first coming of Christ, and the second peak would represent His return in power and glory. But from such a distance, they could not see the great valley that lies between these two mountaintops. We are living in that valley. It is called "the church age". And it will consummate with the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory.

So, as the prophets looked ahead to **both** comings of The Messiah, we now stand in between them, looking back to the death, burial, and resurrection, while looking forward to His triumphant return. This is why Peter explains that the prophets were not serving themselves, but us! For it is us who have received the grace of which they spoke. We have firsthand knowledge of what they only dreamed about. They foretold it, but we have experienced it. Therefore, we are more blessed than the prophets. We live in constant communion with the Risen LORD! We have received God's wondrous gift of grace, just as the prophets have foretold.

Preachers (vs. 12b)

These things have now been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by The Holy Spirit sent from heaven — angels long to catch a glimpse of these things. **1 Peter 12b**

John The Baptist was the last of *The Old Testament*-style prophets. After Him, there came the long succession of preachers of the gospel. Why is that? Because the salvation that was promised by the prophets was fulfilled in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. He came to fulfill what was promised. Where *The Old Testament* prophets looked forward to the great day of salvation, we the church look back to it. And from that sacred moment in time, we preach the truth.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:16**

We, the Church, have been given not only the tremendous gift of grace called salvation, but we have also been charged with the privilege to share this message with others. As bad as this world gets as it spirals further and further into the abyss of debauchery and brutality, we alone have the message of hope. We are called to be the preachers of righteousness.

And throughout this "valley of the church age", God has called many great preachers, empowered by The Holy Spirit to teach and proclaim the Word of The LORD. Many will respond and an even greater number will reject this message. This according to The God of The Scriptures, Who foresees all in His omniscience. We must always take refuge in the knowledge that God knows full well who will believe and who will not. Therefore, it is not ours to force the issue, but merely proclaim the truth to those who will hear it. Jesus had a saying that He repeated wherever He preached, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**" None of us are capable of knowing just whose ears will listen, and who will turn to Christ for salvation. So we preach to any and all in every circumstances. We do not judge those around us, for our enemies today, may very well be our bothers and sisters in Christ tomorrow!

The Apostles, who knew and saw Christ with their own eyes, were the first ones called by The Spirit to preach the message of the gospel, both to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. This was as Paul often called it, "The great mystery of God," to bring Jews and Gentiles together in one body.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time — to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in Him. In Him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of The One Who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of His will, so that we who already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to His glory. Ephesians 1:9-12

And

By reading this you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. This was not made known to people in other generations as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by The Spirit. The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Ephesians 3:4-6

While even *The Old Testament* prophets spoke of a time that God would unite the nations under one banner, no one really understood that, in Christ, members of every tribe and nation would receive this same salvation, by grace through faith. God's plan was always to graft us into one Branch, as it were. And that Branch is Christ. No one could even fathom how this this would all take place, but we, the Church, have seen it with our own eyes. We have witnessed the grace of God reconcile the irreconcilable. And even the angels in heaven are fascinated with the awe of God's grace (**1 Peter 1:12b**). In fact, according to Paul, the angels in heaven intently watch the church so they can discern what God is doing!

This grace was given to me — the least of all the saints — to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ, and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God Who created all things. This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known THROUGH THE CHURCH to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. This is according to His eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our LORD. Ephesians 3:8-11
(emphasis added)

So members of the church, take your calling seriously. For you are being observed by the very hosts of heaven!

And The Promised Land (vs. 13)

Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13

When I was younger, I once heard a pastor say, "When you see the word *therefore* in Scripture, always look to see what it is *there for*." He was right of course. And Peter's use of the word here is no exception. The intent is clear. Since we have been given such powerful insight into grace, since we have experienced for ourselves that which the prophets and the angels of heaven can only dream about, then we should do something with that which we have been given. Namely, set our minds for action. We need to prioritize our thinking in such a way as to be looking intently at the eternal, rather than being caught up in the temporal.

Remember what Peter said about the prophets and the preachers being led by The Spirit as to what to say in their writings and sermons? Well, here is a case in point of this fact. The Spirit led Peter to choose the word *anazonnyimi* (pronounced an-ad-zone'-noo mee) to describe the "setting of your mind for action", in the CSB. The word literally means to "*gird up your loins*." It only occurs here, in the entire *New Testament*. The King James Version (KJV) *Bible* actually renders the phrase accurately:

Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 1:13 (KJV)

The phrase “*gird up your loins*” was a very common *Old Testament* metaphor, which carries with it the idea of being ready for action. For you see, in ancient *Bible* times, people wore long flowing robes that went down all the way to their ankles. So, in order to run or fight in a battle, a man had to pull up those robes between his legs, pulling the garment in two halves around his waist and trying the two halves together like a belt across his stomach. This enabled the man to move about with haste.

So why choose this word as a metaphor for setting one’s mind for action? The truth lies in the ancient Scriptures regarding the Passover. The LORD commanded the children of Israel to apply the blood of the lamb to their doorposts, then to eat the Passover meal in haste, with their loins girded for action (***Exodus 12:11***). For you see, the very next morning they were to leave Egypt behind in the exodus. They were to begin their journey through the wilderness and into the promised land.

Now, let us move to our salvation provided by The Spotless Lamb of God. God takes the blood of His sacrifice and “applies it to us”, and we are passed over from death unto life everlasting. And from that moment on, we are to set our minds upon our inheritance, our very own *promised land*, if you will. We leave Egypt (this world) behind us as we begin our journey through this wilderness here below, never forgetting that we are strangers in this place looking forward to our very own land of promise. So our focus is no longer on the here and now, but on what is to come; namely, the *revelation*, or second appearing of our LORD, when all things will work together for our good. And that is how we are able to rejoice in even the darkest of times. For we know our deliverance draweth nigh. Jesus is coming soon! And in this, is all of our hope.

The word for hope in *The New Testament* (*elpis*) means “*a confident expectation of what is to come*”. And our hope is in the return of Christ Jesus. Therefore, we set our minds on what is to come and not what is in the present, for we are merely travelers passing through this world. And our hearts and minds are set upon the promised land. The early Quakers used to rise early every morning and pray, “Maybe today LORD, maybe today.” And every night before they went to sleep they prayed, “Maybe tomorrow, LORD, maybe tomorrow.” For you see, their minds were *girded for action*. They lived in the ever present hope of Christ’s return. And when you are constantly awaiting His revelation, the troubles and trials of this world do not control you. They are merely things that have come to pass, on your journey homeward. **Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).** And find joy in the journey. As the great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, “*A little faith will take your soul to heaven, but a great faith will bring heaven to your soul.*”

TRUTH!!!