

TITLE: The Glory of our Salvation (Part 2) *Our Privileged Place in the Plan of Providence*

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1:12

THEME: Our privileged place in the salvation plan

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I heard this story the other day

A preacher dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a handsome guy who's dressed in sunglasses, leather jacket and jeans. Saint Peter addresses him and says "Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?" The guy replies, "I'm Tom Johnson, a retired American Airlines Pilot from Dallas, TX." Saint Peter consults the book of life, smiles and says to the pilot, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom."

Next it's the preacher's turn. He stands erect and booms out, "I am Joseph Snow, pastor of Integrity Bible Church in Minneapolis MN for the last 43 years." Saint Peter consults his list. He says to him, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom." "Just a minute," says the minister. "That man was a pilot and he gets a silken robe and golden staff, and I get only cotton and wood. How can this be?" Well, said Peter, I have a notation here. Here is it: Whenever Tom Johnson flew his airplane, people prayed." Whenever you preached - - people slept."

Hopefully, that won't be said of me. However, if TAP was good enough to put people to sleep, who am I to expect anything less!

Sort of like what was said of one preacher: "If we took everyone who listened to you and lined them all up on their backs end to end they'd be much more comfortable."

Read Passage

This passage brings to mind what Jesus said to t/70 in Luke 10. Rem. Jesus sent out 70 disciples ahead of him in pairs (35 pairs of 2). 70 went out & returned full of joy saying that even t/demons were subject to them in Jesus' name. Jesus replied to them that he had given them that authority and more. Then, putting it all in perspective, he says in v. 20:

“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

IOW - we can rejoice about lots of things, even spectacular spiritual victories. But there's no greater joy than knowing that your sins are forgiven & that you have an eternal place in t/KD of God.

In a similar way, in our passage, Peter seeks to increase his reader's appreciation for the salvation they have in Christ and t/privilege that it is to live in the "fulness of time" that Galatians 4:4 talks about.

Extended main idea==>

Our privileged place in the salvation plan was pursued and predicted in the past by prophets, proclaimed in the present by preachers, passionately peered at by the angels.

Reader's Digest Version==>

We possess a privileged place in the providential plan.

That's our main point [^]

I. Our Privileged Place in the Plan of Providence (10-12)

Era we live in is a privileged one. We are blessed to be part of t/fulness of t/CH age in JC, to know t/truth of t/gospel – to know and love JC.

As a way of putting our privilege in perspective, Peter begins by looking back into biblical history, into t/OT (part. OT prophets).

Fulness of grace that we experience in JC was something (point A) ==>

A. Pursued in the Past by Prophets (10-11)

2 aspects of this pursuit. 1st we looked at last week in vv. 10 and 11 ==>

1. The Research of the Prophets (10-11)

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that [would come] to you sought out and carefully inquired, they sought for what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

IOW -

1. The Research of the Prophets (10-11)

consisted of the fact that t/Prophets did two things (really 1 thing; 2 words parallel ea. other for emphasis)==>

... sought out and carefully inquired ...

About what?

... for what person or time [person = messiah; time = time of t/messiah] **the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating** [that is, it was the H.S. who inspired them] **when he** [the H.S.] **predicted** [through OT prophecy] **the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.**

We saw last week that t/prophecies relate to two seemingly contrary things: That the Christ (Messiah) would suffer and then be glorified. Perfectly fulfilled in t/person of JC who suffered for our sin & was glorified by t/Father.

That's==>

1. The Research of the Prophets (10-11)

Other half of this equation is in v. 12==>

2. The Revelation Given to the Prophets (12a)

a. The Revelation was given in response to their question

What was t/? {restate from vv. 10-11}. Here's the Rev.:

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you ...

b. Word used here: ἀποκαλυπτω (cf. Apocalypse of John)

Aorist/past-tense passive voice: "It was revealed." Word is 26x in NT & it's always used of revelation given by God to men. God is source.

(1) What was the content of the revelation?

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you in these things ... (what "things?" - salvation things; Jesus things)

Answer was that it was not their time. Revelation given to them was that t/time for t/fullness of grace revealed in X was not yet to come in their lifetime.

In this sense, t/OT prophets were "servants" & you get t/benefit of their service! They ministered to and for us.

(2) The idea that the prophets ministered for later (Xn) believers is common in the NT

Remember, last wk. we looked at Romans 4 & Paul's argument that justification was always by grace thru faith. In using t/example of Abraham, of whom it says that he "believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness," TAP writes in vv. 23-24==>

23 Now not for [Abraham's] sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, 24 but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, IOW . . .

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

In 1 Cor. 9, Paul quotes a passage out of Deut. and then says that it was written for our sake. Same here.

Like t/story told by t/old Scottish NT scholar, William Barclay, who tells about a blind lamplighter who went about lighting street lamps back in t/days before electricity. Barclay likens t/man whom he described as a man who "tapped his way from lamp-post to lamp-post bringing to others a light which he himself would never see." [181] and draws an analogy between that lamplighter & t/OT prophets.

I guess that's a good analogy - they tapped their way through t/OT Scriptures and set the stage for t/light of t/world (JC) that they never saw this side of eternity.

Why Jesus could declare to t/disciples in Matthew 13:17 “. . . that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Acts 3:24 [Peter] “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

(a) Think of the Heroes of the Faith in Hebrews 11

"By faith" used 19x. – v. 1-2; {read 1st part of ea. "by faith" verse}

Note v. 13 - They never saw t/fulfillment of God's covenant w/Abraham, t/apex of which was t/appearing of JC. Read vv. 32-40a.

We possess a privileged place in the providential plan.

I. Our Privileged Place in the Plan of Providence (10-12)

A. Pursued in the Past by Prophets (10-11)

That which was pursued in the past is (point B) ==>

B. Proclaimed in the Present by Preachers (12b)

It was revealed to them [the prophets of old] that they were not serving themselves, but you [we who partake of the New Covenant] in these things [all that is our salvation] which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven,

1. Our Present Privileged Place in the Plan!

Every one of us who knows JC has at some point responded to t/proclamation of t/Gospel by some sort of "preacher" anyway.

a. No one comes to Christ apart from hearing that message

Romans 10:13-14 for “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

In this sense, "Preaching" isn't some sort of devotional homily; preaching is t/proclamation of God's Word centered on t/person and work of JC.

2. Lot's of counterfeit preaching out there

Unfort., most preaching has little or nothing to do w/biblical preaching. Most preaching has little to say about JC // exposition of Scripture // powerless. It may be entertaining, but it's powerless.

I agree with John MacArthur who said that==>

"Preaching in our day is often intriguing, but seldom commanding; often entertaining, but seldom convicting; often popular, but seldom powerful; often interesting, but less often transforming." [MacArthur, 1 Timothy, 170]

a. May wonder "why?"

Why is there such a lack of Spirit-filled, Word-centered, historically-proven preaching in t/CH today? Two reasons . . . One thing we're not willing to do & one thing we are willing to do.

(1) We are not willing to pay the price

That kind of preaching that pleases God is costly. It's hard work. Truly been said that preparing & delivering a sermon is an experience as close to giving birth that a man may ever experience.

There's labor (laboring over a passage); there's delivery (intense effort & angst that goes into t/actual preaching); as I mentioned a few wks. ago, there's post-preaching depression that so many of us experience.

May sound melodramatic, but I agree w/Bruce Thielman who said that "There's no special honor in preaching, there is only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it like the sea calls its sailors. And like the sea it batters and bruises and does not rest. To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know each time you do it you must do it again."

Fact is - relatively few pastors today are willing to pay that price. Either they're not gifted to do so // not trained // not called // lazy // t/CH they serve won't allow them t/time to prioritize their study.

(a) I'm blessed in that regard

While this CH is small & that means I have to wear lots of hats (I can't sit in my study for 40 hrs. like some men can), we're in agreement that I'm to make my study a priority. Focus of t/leadership is that t/proclamation of God's Word be t/centerpiece of Sun. AM worship.

Few CH's are willing to do that. We have a mind-set that worship = congregational singing, hearing a special by some great singer, & maybe a drama or two. We just try to get t/sermon from getting in t/way of our worship & so we settle for a 20 minute homily that we hope doesn't bore people to death. We wonder why t/CH is in t/state that it is?!

Listen, faithful, biblical preaching is the capstone of our worship!

Mark Dever, well-known pastor in Washington D.C. area tells about teaching a day-long seminar on puritanism at a church in London. He mentioned that puritan sermons were sometimes two hours long. At this, one person gasped audibly, and asked, "What time did that leave for worship?" What's the assumption? That hearing God's word preached doesn't constitute worship.

Dever replied that many English Protestant Christians would have considered hearing God's word in their own language and responding to it in their lives the essential part of their worship. Whether they had time to sing together would have been of comparatively was of little concern. A church built on music--of whatever style--is a church built on shifting sands. Preaching is the fundamental component of pastoring. [Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, Internet Quotation from The Expositor's Quote of the Week, 2003]

J.I. Packer, in his book A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan View of the Christian Life ==>

"[The Puritans believed in] the supreme importance of preaching. To the Puritans, the sermon was the liturgical climax of public worship. Nothing, they said, honours God more than the faithful declaration and obedient hearing of his truth. Preaching, under any circumstances, is an act of worship, and must be performed as such. Moreover, preaching is the prime means of grace to the church. . . . Preaching is thus a very solemn and momentous enterprise. Both minister and congregation should recognize that their Sunday sermons are the most important and significant events of the week. Whatever else is neglected, sermons must not be." [Crossway, 1990], p. 281-82]

Why is there such a lack of Spirit-Filled, Word-Centered, Historically Proven Preaching? 1) We're not willing to pay t/price. BTW - Another factor in that regard - There's a price that t/Herald has to pay; but there's also a price t/Hearer pays in being willing to open his Bible, listen, obey t/voice of God & maybe even take some notes.

(1) We are not willing to pay the price what not willing to do

2) What we are are willing to do is bow the knee to pragmatism

Pragmatism = philosophy that what works is what's right. We live in a climate where t/goal is to bring people in t/doors. If it takes entertaining them to do so, let's entertain them. Don't mention anything controversial // offend them in any way. We'll take down t/crosses (an offense), we won't talk about sin, we won't get into doctrine. We'll have lots of music, some drama, a beautiful facility that looks more like a mega-mall than a CH, an uplifting message, no more than 30 minutes long, filled w/jokes and stories. In fact, there's a name for that kind of preaching: "skyscraper preaching" where you build t/message a level at a time w/one story after another. Brings in lots of people. If it works it must be right . . . Right?

2 Timothy 4:2-5 **2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.** [C'mon Paul, if you do that you will empty the place] **3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth [God's Word], and will turn aside to myths [stories and jokes]. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, [and in doing so you will] fulfill your ministry.**

If we wanted to bow t/knee to pragmatism, rather than to truth, I have no doubt that we could fill this place in t/span of a few yrs. Masses want to be entertained. Masses don't want biblical exposition.

I learned recently that a study was done of t/most spiritually apathetic regions in t/nation & upstate NY ranked #1. If this study is true, we live in t/most spiritually insensitive area of t/country.

In 10 years of preaching I had never had one person walk out in middle of a message, until I came here. It's happened at least twice. First time I had been here about 6 months and was doing a series on leadership from 1 Tim. 3. Had entire row of visitors that started talking back & forth & all of a sudden all got up and walked out. I talked to 1 of them later on phone who told me that they just weren't interested in what I was talking about. Just plain rude, not to mention spiritually insensitive.

I can understand it when an unbeliever does it. I can't understand it when it's a professed believer. May not walk out physically, but they do so mentally. Something's wrong when we can sit for hours watching a football game or a movie, but somehow just can't manage to listen to God's Word for one hour out of the 168 hours that make up our week.

I don't think there can be any doubt that our greatest need is revival. If there was true revival in this nation, all t/mega-churches that teach spiritual drivel would be emptied in favor of CHs that faithfully & powerfully preach God's truth undiluted.

3. Revival comes from God by way of the Holy Spirit

That brings us back to v. 12==>

... these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you BY THE HOLY SPIRIT SENT FROM HEAVEN ...

Men preach the gospel by (could be translated "through") t/H.S. Men do it, the Spirit empowers it.

a. What's "Spirit-empowered preaching?"

Let me tell you what it isn't. It isn't unprepared preaching. It isn't preaching apart from t/intellect. Not divorced from academics.

Story is told that a friend approached the Reformer Martin Luther one day and said, "Martin, you spend too much time studying. What you need to do is simply trust the H.S. and let him speak through you." Luther tried it. Some

time later his friend came to him and said, "Martin, did you do what I suggested?" Luther said "Yes, I did." "Did you Holy Spirit speak?" "Yes he did." "What did he say?" "He said, 'Martin, never try to preach without being unprepared?'"

"S.E.P." isn't unprepared preaching. On t/other hand, being totally prepared // studied, following all t/rules for putting together a sermon doesn't guarantee "S.E.P." Preaching in power of t/H.S. involves both working together. Dynamic that can be illustrated by Paul's words in Col. 1:29==> **And for this purpose [all that is ministry] . . . I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.**

John Piper, in his book The Supremacy of God in Preaching ==>

How utterly dependent we are on the Holy Spirit in the work of preaching! All genuine preaching is rooted in a feeling of desperation. You wake up on Sunday morning and you can smell the smoke of hell on one side and feel the crisp breezes of heaven on the other. You go to your study and look down at your pitiful manuscript, and you kneel down and cry, "God, this is so weak! Who do I think I am? What audacity to think that in three hours my words will be the odor of death to death and the fragrance of life to life (2 Cor 2:16). My God, who is sufficient for these things?" . . . The dangers of self-reliance and self-exaltation in the ministry of preaching are so insidious that God will strike us if he must in order to break us of our self-assurance and the casual use of our professional techniques. [The Supremacy of God in Preaching, Baker, 1990, p. 37-38]

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 **1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.**

James Henry Thornwell, a great preacher of a c. ago ==>

It is a great matter to understand what it is to be a preacher, and how preaching should be done. Effective sermons are the offspring of study, of discipline of prayer, and especially of the unction of the Holy Ghost

Ultimately, I don't depend on my training // knowledge // preparation (as

imp. as these things are). Ultimately I depend on t/HS of God. I don't stand before you in this pulpit w/o an utter feeling of hopelessness knowing that if t/Spirit God does not move neither will you.

In fact, I've said many times that I don't enjoy preaching. Not that I look forward to it thinking, Oh boy, I get to stand in front of dozens of people & talk. Wow, I get to be on t/radio today. Cool. No! It's truly a bitter-sweet experience. I know that I'm fulfilling my calling and there's joy in that. But also a sense in which I shrink from t/task // sometimes feel like running away from it. But in t/kindness of God & w/the encouragement of t/H.S. I know that I can't. (and of course your prayers . . .)

I. Our Privileged Place in the Plan of Providence (10-12)

A. Pursued in the Past by Prophets (10-11)

B. Proclaimed in the Present by Preachers (12b)

Lastly ==>

C. Passionately Peered at by Angels (12c)

. . . things into which angels desire to look.

This is one of the most profound statements in the NT!

1. Word "Things" should point you back to the beginning of the passage (v. 10)

IOW - The "things" into which angels desire to look are the same "things" that t/prophets prophesied about ==> our salvation ratified by t/blood of JC.

a. Angels desire to "look into" all of this - Picturesque word - παρακυματω - to steal a glance, stoop to look at

It's to "stretch forward t/head, esp. thru a window or door." "to bend down to look & often suggest a fleeting glance; i.e., 'to peep,' 'to catch a glimpse of' (Hort; Kelly). Idea here rests on t/intense interest in what has taken place & on t/inherent limitations of their power & knowledge (Michaels)." [NLEKGNT]

Same word (παρακλυπτω) is used in Luke 24:12 and John 20:5,11 of Peter, John and Mary "stooping down to look into the empty tomb."

I picture a small child who isn't tall enough to look over a wall or railing at something of great interest. The child is limited by his abilities. Same with the angels, they long to catch a glance at the greatness of the salvation we experience.

Prep. παρα means alongside of. Idea that the angels peer into the mysteries of the church from beside of it. They are not participants, but spectators.

An old hymn contains the following words: Holy, Holy, is what the angels sing, And I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring; But when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings, For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings. [cited in Swindoll, Laugh Again, 87-88]

(2) Are a few other passages where we see same sort of thing

In 1 Corinthians 4:9 TAP says that t/ministry of t/apostles was a spectacle both to angels and to men.

Turn to Eph. 3:8-12 ==> 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things;10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

Verse 10 – "Through the church" - "through" = δια = the prep. of intermediate agency. It is the instrument of t/CH that makes known the truth of God's wisdom. In this sense, t/CH is t/teacher of angels.

When I proclaim the truth of God's Word you're not the only audience. I preach to t/hosts of heaven (and hell). Why we are to take t/proclamation of the Word so seriously.

My primary audience is to be God. I hate to say it, but it really doesn't matter if you're pleased w/me so long as God is pleased w/me. Don't get me wrong, I want you to be pleased, but that can't be my #1 aim. Hopefully, if God is pleased then you should be also.

(3) We could look at 2 Tim. 4 in reverse

Rem. that passage I read earlier? *"time will come when people won't tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will follow teachers who please them."* Implication is that there is a preaching that pleases men and doesn't please God. If someone likes what God doesn't, something's wrong.

If I do what pleases God & you want what pleases God then you should be pleased in what pleases God. Right? All of this delights t/holy Angels.

2. Angels are not omniscient (only God is)

They are not completely aware of the plan God has for us. At least not all the details. Apparently, there's a sense in which they are subject to learning thru observation.

Angels have always had an interest in t/things of Christ. Angels announced Christ's birth (Luke 1:26-35; 2:10-14); Angels ministered to Christ during his time of testing (Matt. 4:11); they stood by the grave after he rose from the dead ((Matt. 28:5-7); they attended at his ascension to heaven (Acts 1:10-11); they will attend to Him when he returns (2 Thess. 1:7).

Bottom line is that angels exist to worship God. If they are longing (επιθυμια - strong desire) – if they have this strong desire to look into what we're doing then we (note this) we assist the angels in worship when we worship! Our worship of t/King in some sense helps t/angels in their worship. Awesome thought.

[We possess a privileged place in the providential plan.](#)

I. Our Privileged Place in the Plan of Providence (10-12)

Note the time element in these three verses . . .

A. Pursued in the Past by Prophets (10-11)

OT prophets who were seeking/searching/questioning, they were looking forward to "what person and what time" t/fulness of grace would appear.

B. Proclaimed in the Present by Preachers (12b)

. . . these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the holy spirit sent from heaven . . .

C. Passionately Peered at by Angels (12c)

. . . things into which angels desire to look.

Angels who even now are trying to peek over edge of their realm into ours to gain insight into the things of Christ.

Where are we? We're sort of in the middle being the recipients of the grace of X.

[We possess a privileged place in the providential plan.](#)

Are you confident you possess that place?

Even if you're going through a hard time, as was Peter's audience, find joy in knowing that, as Jesus said, your name is recorded in heaven.

If you're not confident, I pray that you would come to acknowledge your need (that you have sinned against God & deserve only His wrath) & that you would come to believe in JC as your Savior and Lord, as t/one who satisfied t/wrath of God on t/cross as t/one who died for your sin.