

Future Grace

1 Peter 1:10-12

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12 (ESV))

Our worship text begins, “concerning this salvation”. Recall that the Apostle Peter was writing these blessed truths to Jewish believers, men and women who had, in their earlier years, grown up in the synagogue, learning the Old Testament law and especially leaning that their salvation would come to them only as they lived in obedience to the law; but then, as these words tell us, through the preaching of the “good news” they had heard, they had given their hearts to Christ and been saved.

And here, the Apostle finds it needful to remind them that the blessed plan that had brought them to salvation, salvation that had come to them through faith in Christ and by His sacrifice of atonement on the cross, and not through obedience to the law, was no “new” biblical doctrine, that the Old Testament prophets were well aware and plainly taught that “true salvation” must come through a person, a “Messiah”, sent from God and not through the law or through the works of their own hands.

The only thing that the Old Testament prophets had not known was exactly who the Messiah would be and exactly when He would come. And as these words tell us, no matter how much those prophets searched and inquired into the Old Testament scriptures, they could not determine those things for themselves.

Why did God veil this from the eyes of those prophets? We can't know the answer for sure, but I am convinced that one reason was that had they known the “whole story” they would not have had need for faith. For that reason, God seems always to leave part of His plan a mystery. Our faith is ever so important to God.

These words again,

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he (the Spirit of Christ) predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. (1 Peter 1:10-11 (ESV))

As I read these words, I am very aware that many of our modern day church leaders tend to rely far more on the words of the New Testament, not paying proper respect, nor giving proper credence to the truths and to the prophetic words that are contained within the Old Testament. They pick certain New Testament verses that speak about our “not being under the law” but being “under grace”. And in error, they assume that those verses are referring to the whole of the Old Testament. And to their loss, and the loss of their listeners, they literally “toss out” many of the precious truths that are given in the “laws and the prophets”, words like those that we will study today.

They don't seem to understand that words of instruction such as those to Timothy from the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3 were referring specifically to the Old Testament scriptures, telling how valuable and how absolutely needful those Old Testament scriptures will always be to us as we believe in Christ and as we trust in Him. Listen!

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV))

Yes, the “scriptures” referred to here would eventually also include the New Testament scriptures. But at the time the Apostle Paul penned these words, there was no New Testament, only the Old Testament. So Again, every “jot and tittle” of the Old Testament “laws and prophets” are forever valid and forever . . .

16 . . . breathed out by God (whether it be Old or New Testament) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV))

And may I also add, please, do not for a minute listen to anyone who preaches otherwise.

May we also take a moment and consider what God really intended by those words in Romans 6 that make reference to our “not being under the law, but being under grace.” In Romans 6:14 we read,

14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:14 (ESV))

The matter that is at the forefront here is “sin”. But before anyone can ever know what sin really is and if they have committed a sin, there must first be a structured set of laws in place that define the standards of “right” and “wrong” for us. Just as simply as the speed limit signs on our highways are given to establish the limits for safe driving, so

also the laws of God are given to establish good and loving and safe standards of conduct, first between us and God and then between us and other people.

As it now stands, you and I need only to compare our behavior to the laws of God to know if we have sinned.

And fortunately, our relationship to the law does not end with simply knowing when we have sinned, we need also to know a “remedy” that will correct those many occasions when we do behave badly and violate God’s laws.

And that is where many people go astray, both Jews and non-Jews alike. And that is one of the points God wants us to understand from this passage today. So many, many people, both Jews and Non-Jews alike, believe that if they simply work hard to not violate God’s laws, and then do some “good works”, they will be OK. Unfortunately though, that will never satisfy the standards of God’s holiness. In Romans 4, we are told that if we were able to earn our salvation by our personal good efforts, then we could “boast”.

No, the remedy for our sin must ever and always be “grace”, a free gift from God, so that no man can boast. Ephesians 2,

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV))

And this free gift from God spoken about here comes to us only through the shed blood of Christ and through our faith in Him and in His sacrifice that paid the penalty for our sin. There is no other way or means of salvation for our souls! None!

And as our worship text explains to us, by the “unction” of the Spirit of Christ, the Old Testament prophets knew about this truth about grace. And their hearts were continually being provoked to search through the scrolls and the scriptures to find who this “Messiah” might be and when He would appear. And such was so also even for angels.

Those scriptures again,

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. (1 Peter 1:10-11 (ESV))

May we pause here for a moment and “take in” exactly what God is saying to us in these words. Hundreds, even thousands of years before the Lord Jesus came to the earth, His Holy Spirit was speaking words into the hearts and minds of the Prophets, Moses and Jeremiah and Isaiah and others, telling them all that would take place in the years to come, and especially when He, Jesus the Messiah, would come to the earth to save the souls of men.

And we can only imagine the excitement in Isaiah’s heart as he began thinking and writing down the words given to him by the Spirit of Christ. Listen to these words in Isaiah 9 that tell about when Jesus would and be born among us as a child, verse 6,
6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
(Isaiah 9:6-7 (KJV))

Our worship text tells us that as Isaiah wrote these words, he was yearning to personally know who he was thinking and writing about, and when it would all take place, when this Messiah would be born.

Again, these words were coming into Isaiah’s mind from the Holy Spirit, so He did not personally know any more about the coming Christ than we would have known. The reality is you and I actually now know far more than Isaiah knew then, because we are now able to look back into all of the subsequent scriptures and at all of the events that took place at Calvary. Isaiah truly did yearn to know what you and I now know. And I believe that that would have been especially so as Isaiah thought and wrote the words in Isaiah 53 about the sufferings of Christ. Listen!

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with

a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief. (Isaiah 53:4-10 (ESV))

Folks, within these words are just about all the “gospel” that mankind really needs to convince our souls about why and how and through whom salvation comes. Verse 6 . . .

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him (upon Christ) the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

This is the “why”! You and I are lost sheep! We have gone astray and we need a faithful shepherd to come to look for us and to find us, to redeem us and to bring us back safely into the fold. The Spirit of Christ is our Great Shepherd of the sheep.

But the great tragedy is, as Christ our great Shepherd has pursued after us to save us, He has had to go through the awful sufferings of the cross. Sin so violates the holiness of God that for us to be saved, sin has to be dealt with and removed from our souls.

And to do that,

6 . . . the LORD (God the Father) has laid on him (the Lord Jesus) the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

And as the Lord Jesus shed His blood and died there on the cross, He took all of our sin and iniquity away from our souls. Praise the Lord!

And again, can’t you just imagine, as Isaiah pondered and thought through all these words as he penned them, he must have been both broken hearted but also overwhelmed with gratefulness. Here, God was revealing to Isaiah that it would be Isaiah’s own sins that would help put Christ through all His awful sufferings. But then also that it would be through His, through Christ’s, stripes that he, Isaiah, would be forgiven and healed. But also, that this blessed grace would reach to all sinners everywhere, for all generations to come, a “future grace”.

And while we aren’t told such, I choose to imagine that Isaiah ran throughout the halls of the palace and throughout the temple preaching these words and crying and rejoicing, and praising God.

But again, according to our worship passage, God also chose to limit some of the details that Isaiah would be able to understand, especially those details about when the Messiah would come and who He would be. So Isaiah was left to his faith.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12 (ESV))

Here, God tells us that Isaiah was able to know that his words were about “grace” and that they were especially intended for those of us who would inhabit future generations. And that is so very obvious now that we can look back, both at Isaiah’s prophecies and then also at the historical events of Jesus’ crucifixion, His death, His burial and His resurrection. And were it not for such scriptures as those of Isaiah 9 telling about the birth of Jesus, and then also the words of Isaiah 53 that tell us about his suffering and death on the cross, we might never have identified Jesus as being the One Isaiah was prophesying about.

Again, the central message within these words of today’s text is about God’s blessed grace, yes, spoken about by Isaiah 2700 years ago, but effectual for you and me today as we live and move and have our being within this iniquity laden world of today. “Grace” has a mystical power within it that you and I will forever struggle to comprehend; especially that “grace” was not just a one-time gift of salvation that saved our souls on one particular day. Yes, it was that, but it is also much, much more. Grace is an ever-flowing river of atonement, a river of living water, ever-washing, ever-cleansing each of us from our sins and from our iniquities.

Yes, at repentance and salvation, all our past sins were wiped away. But as we well know, sin will continue to do its work in us. And those future sins demand the need for “future grace”. Thankfully that too will be freely given to us through Christ.

What is required of you and me for us to obtain this “future grace”? First, it is already ours through our initial salvation. But God does also want a continuing response from us, and that response is “faith”. Our “faith” is what keeps us flowing along with that river of God’s grace.

Many preachers of today tell us that “gratitude” is our best response to the blessed gift of our salvation. And yes, “gratitude” towards Christ for all that He has done is a right thing to do. But the most important response from us must always be “faith”, a living and on-going faith, a faith that can flow with us as we are carried along by the free-flowing waters of God’s grace.

One final thought! May I recommend a book to you by John Piper entitled, “Future Grace”? There Piper encourages us to know that God’s grace only began its great blessing of us in those first moments when we first received Christ as our Savior. From those first moments on and continuing forever throughout eternity, His “future grace” will be ever-present to continue to guide, and protect and bless us beyond all we could ever hope or imagine. Praise be to God!

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