



LESSON THREE

The Proving of Our Faith and the Unveiling of Jesus Christ

Scripture Reading:

1 Peter 1

- 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 1:4** Unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, kept in the heavens for you,
- 1:5** Who are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time;
- 1:6** In which time you exult, though for a little while at present, if it must be, you have been made sorrowful by various trials,
- 1:7** So that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 1:8** Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,
- 1:9** Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- 1:10** Concerning this salvation the prophets, who prophesied concerning the grace that was to come unto you, sought and searched diligently,
- 1:11** Searching into what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them was making clear, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories after these.
- 1:12** To them it was revealed that not to themselves but to you they ministered these things, which have now been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, which things angels long to look into.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What does the “proving of our faith” refer to in verse 7? Please use an illustration to explain if needed.
2. What did Peter mean by “the unveiling of Jesus Christ”? Please relate to your own experience.
3. What does John 14:19- 20 indicate? When will the unbelievers see this fact?

Section 2:

1. What is the difference between praise, glory and honour?
2. What does the full salvation of the Triune God include?
3. What does the “living hope” depend on? How does this relate to us?

Section 3:

4. What is the correct understanding of grace in the Bible?
5. What did Peter mean by “what manner of time”?

Section 4:

1. What does the word “salvation” refer to in verse 10? What does grace mean in the Bible?
2. How could Peter say that the Spirit of Christ was already in the Old Testament prophets? How does it relate to us today?

THE FULL SALVATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD AND ITS ISSUES

In the foregoing message we considered 1:5 and 6. We saw from verse 5 that we are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto salvation and that this salvation is ready to be revealed at the last time. The power of God is the cause by which we are being guarded, and faith is the means through which the power of God becomes effective in guarding us. We also saw that the salvation spoken of in this verse denotes the full salvation of the Triune God in three stages: the initial stage, the stage of regeneration; the progressing stage, the stage of transformation; and the completing stage, the stage of consummation. This salvation is ready to be revealed at the last time, at the time of the Lord's coming. According to verse 6, Peter tells us that we should exult in this last time, though for a while, if necessary, we are made sorrowful by various trials.

THE PROVING OF OUR FAITH

In verse 7 Peter continues, "That the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes and is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the unveiling of Jesus Christ." In this verse Peter gives the reason we are put into trials. We are put into trials because our faith needs to be tested, proved.

The Greek word rendered "proving" means testing for approval. It is the proving, the testing, of our faith, not our faith itself, that may be found unto praise. This may be compared to an examination in school related to a student's study. It is not the student's study itself that is found approved; rather, it is the examination that is found to be approved. Of course, the approval of our faith comes out of the proper faith. The emphasis here is not on our faith; the emphasis is on the proving of our faith by the trials through sufferings.

A good student will actually welcome the opportunity to be examined. An examination will prove how thoroughly he has studied and how much he knows concerning the material on which he is being tested. Without examinations, a superior student would never be proved to be outstanding. A student who studies diligently

may look forward to an examination because it will prove, both to the student himself and to others, that he is an excellent student. This is an illustration of what Peter means by the proving of our faith.

In verse 7 Peter says that the proving of our faith is "much more precious than of gold which perishes and is proved by fire." The words "much more precious than of gold...by fire" do not modify faith; they modify the proving. This means that the proving of our faith is much more precious than the proving of gold. The comparison here is not that between faith and gold. Many Christians understand verse 7 in this way; however, this understanding is wrong. The comparison here is that between the proving of our faith and the proving of gold. Gold is proved by the purifying fire. In like manner, our faith is proved by trial. This proving is certainly more precious than the proving of gold.

In verse 7 Peter uses the adjective "precious." Peter in his two Epistles presents us five precious things: the precious stone, which is the Lord Himself (1 Pet. 2:4, 6-7); the precious blood (1 Pet. 1:19); the precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4); the precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1); and the precious proving (1 Pet. 1:7).

THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

In verse 7 Peter indicates that the proving of our faith "may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the unveiling of Jesus Christ." The various trials in verse 6 are that the proving of our faith may result in praise, glory, and honor at the unveiling of the Lord.

Peter's use of the word "unveiling" in verse 7 is significant. Christ is present with us today, but He is veiled. The time of His coming will also be the time of His unveiling. Some mistakenly think that the Lord Jesus is not here today. But the Lord certainly is here. Matthew 28:20 says, "Behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age." Although the Lord is with us, He is with us under the veil. Sometimes, however, in our experience with the Lord, we are not under the veil with Him. But at other times we are with Him under the veil. Are you under the veil with the Lord, or are you outside the veil?

Do you know what the Lord's coming back will be? The Lord's coming back will be His

unveiling. When He is unveiled, we who are under the veil with Him will also be unveiled.

The Lord Jesus actually is present with us today. Do you not believe that the Lord is with us? I must testify that the Lord is in my spirit. But according to the concept of unbelievers, Christ is not with us. Even certain believers who are fundamental and who emphasize the objective aspect of the truth say that Christ is far away in the third heaven on the throne at the right hand of God. Some of these fundamental Christians may not believe that Christ is in us. But we know that the Lord whom we love not only is in the heavens, but also dwells within us.

Because the Lord is now veiled, people cannot see Him. But His coming will be His unveiling. In verse 7 Peter emphasizes the particular matter that the Lord's coming back will be the taking away of the veil that now covers Him. At that time, everyone will see Him. Prior to that time, we can see Him in spirit.

In John 14:19 and 20 the Lord Jesus speaks of being seen by His disciples: "Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." According to John 14:19, the worldly people cannot see the Lord Jesus, but the believers can see Him. In John 14:20 the Lord Jesus indicates that He and we live together. How can we live together with the Lord without seeing Him? Actually, what we have described for us in John 14:20 is not merely living together with the Lord; this verse actually speaks of a life of co-inherence with Him, that is, a life of the Lord living in us and of our living in Him. Because we live such a life, to us He has already been unveiled.

When the Lord Jesus is unveiled and we are unveiled with Him, those who oppose us will be amazed. Today some oppose us and speak evil concerning us. In some cases, young people may be opposed by their parents. Nevertheless, although their parents oppose them, sometimes the parents are astonished at the young people. They may say, "Sometimes you do things that are marvelous. We don't understand you. How can you do these things?" Although the parents of some of the young people may not be able to understand them now, they will understand when the veil is taken away from the Lord Jesus and

also from us. Then they will know the Lord and they will also know us. When the Lord Jesus is unveiled, the worldly people will see Him, and they will see us with Him. Then they will know Christ, and they will also know us.

Unbelievers and people of the world sometimes regard us as peculiar and strange. According to their understanding, we are not normal. They enjoy different kinds of worldly entertainment, but we do not partake of these things. For example, someone at work may encourage you to participate in a certain form of worldly amusement. If you refuse to do so, he may say that you are strange or abnormal. Unbelievers will see things differently when the Lord Jesus is unveiled. When this veil is taken away and our veil is removed as well, the worldly people will say, "Now I know that this one is a follower of Jesus. When I knew him at work, he was one who loved the Lord and sought Him. Now I understand why I thought he was so strange, so abnormal." This will be the situation if we love the Lord and follow Him today. However, if we do not love the Lord, follow Him, and seek Him, our situation will be very different when He is unveiled.

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PRAISE, GLORY, AND HONOR

If the proving of our faith is positive, this proving will result in praise, glory, and honor at the unveiling of Jesus Christ. What is the difference between praise, glory, and honor? It is characteristic of Peter that he does not stop with the word "praise" but goes on to mention glory and honor.

We may use graduation from school as an illustration of the distinction between praise, glory, and honor. Suppose a particular student receives the highest score on a final examination. This proving through testing first results in praise, for he will certainly receive praise for his outstanding achievement. This praise will bring in glory at the time of his graduation, when he is singled out as the most outstanding student in his class. That will certainly be a glory, and this glory will bring him honor. Therefore, first there is praise, then glory, and then honor.

Glory is a certain condition, whereas honor puts us into a particular position. At the time of graduation, the outstanding student in a class is in

a condition of glory and also in a position of honor.

If through the various trials we have a positive proving of our faith, this proving will result in praise, glory, and honor when the Lord Jesus comes back. First, the Lord Jesus will tell us that we have done well. Following this praise, there will be a condition of glory and, along with that, a position of honor.

Before we go on to verse 8, I would point out that verses 3 through 12 are actually one long sentence. In his writing Peter does not care for good language, grammar, or composition. Peter's way of writing indicates that he cares for the divine revelation and for genuine spiritual experience. Although Peter's writings may not be highly regarded by certain scholars, he nevertheless expressed in these verses what he intended to say.

GLORIFIED JOY

Referring to the Lord Jesus, Peter goes on to say in verse 8, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, not seeing at present yet believing, you exult with unspeakable and glorified joy." It is a wonder and a mystery that the believers love One whom they have not seen. The phrase "in whom" modifies believing. We love Him whom we have not seen because of believing, because of the very faith which has been infused into us through hearing the living word (Gal. 3:2). Hence, this faith is under the testing, the proving, in verse 7.

According to verse 8, the believers "exult with unspeakable and glorified joy." Glorified joy is joy immersed in glory; hence, it is full of glory, that is, full of the Lord expressed.

The King James Version adopts the rendering "joy unspeakable and full of glory." We also have a song in our hymnal that says, "It is joy unspeakable and full of glory" (*Hymns*, #1153). Actually, Peter does not mean that we are full of glory. On the contrary, he speaks of a glorified joy. We exult with a joy that is immersed in glory. This joy is immersed in the Lord as glory; thus, it is full of the expression of the Lord.

THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS

Verse 9 continues, "Obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This verse is the direct continuation of verse 7. The proving of

our faith to be found unto praise, glory, and honor results in the obtaining of the end of our faith, that is, the salvation of our souls.

The full salvation of the Triune God includes the Father's regeneration, the Spirit's sanctification or application, and Christ's redemption. This full salvation is revealed in 1:3-23. These verses reveal the full salvation of God in three aspects according to the Trinity. The Father's regeneration brings something into us, and it also brings us into something. Do you know what the Father's regeneration brings into us and what it brings us into? The regeneration of the Father brings eternal life into us. Furthermore, the Father's regeneration brings us into the hope, the inheritance of eternal life. Therefore, eternal life has been brought into us, and we have been brought into the hope, the inheritance, of eternal life. We now have eternal life, and we are also enjoying the inheritance of this eternal life. This is the Father's regeneration with its results, its issue. The result of the Father's regeneration is to bring eternal life into us and to bring us into the full enjoyment of God as our life supply. This life supply is the living hope. This life supply is also the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. This marvelous inheritance is kept in the heavens for us so that we may enjoy it and participate in it daily, hourly, continually.

ENJOYING A LIVING HOPE

In 1:1 and 2, we have the operation of the Triune God: the selection of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Then in the remainder of the first chapter we have the full salvation of the Triune God. This full salvation is composed of the Father's regeneration, the Spirit's application, and the Son's redemption. The Father's regeneration has brought His eternal life into us and has also brought us into the enjoyment of this eternal life. Now this enjoyment is a living hope for us today.

When some hear that we may enjoy the living hope today, they may argue and say, "How can you claim that the living hope is a present matter? Something present can never be a hope. Romans 8 gives us a description of hope. That chapter tells us that hope refers to things that we have not seen." Those who would try to argue in this way need to realize that the living hope, the inheritance, is ours today, tomorrow, and for eternity. With our present enjoyment we have a

hope. This means that our enjoyment of the divine life is a hope. For example, perhaps early in the day you may have a failure in your Christian life. Nevertheless, even though you have failed, you still have a hope. You may say to yourself, "I'm very weak, yet I still have hope. My experience may be poor, but I have hope. Perhaps even later today my experience will be uplifted." Do you not have such a hope within you? We all have this living hope. Day by day we live a life of living hope.

The reason we have a life of hope is that we have a heavenly inheritance. This hope, this inheritance, is the result of the Father's regeneration. In verses 3 through 9 we see various aspects of the inheritance of eternal life. Our enjoyment and experience of eternal life are due to the Father's regeneration.

A recent experience I had with a stomach ulcer may be used to illustrate what Peter means by living hope. When I discovered that I had a problem, I was hospitalized briefly for examination and tests. After the examination and the tests were completed, I began to have a living hope every day. I realized that within my body there is a life that could solve the problem of my ulcer. This life caused me to have a living hope. Eventually, I was fully healed and recovered. I was recovered according to the living hope I had.

A living hope depends on life. If there were no life in our body, we would not have the hope to be healed of any illness or injury. But because we have life in our body, we have the hope for it to be healed of injury or illness. We would not have such a hope for something that is not living. For example, suppose a wooden chair is broken. The chair does not have any hope of repairing itself. If no one comes to work on the chair to repair it, it will remain indefinitely broken without any hope of being fixed. But when I was in the hospital, I could have a living hope because of the life in my body. I had the confidence that my physical life would heal the problem in my body. Therefore, I had a living hope.

What is a living hope? A living hope is a hope that comes from life. This hope results from the living, organic element within us.

In addition to physical life, we also have the divine life in us through the Father's regeneration. This life is the strongest, richest,

and highest life. To be sure, this life will take care of us. We may have problems and troubles, but we have a living hope because of the divine life within us. We are not dead—we are living. Thus, we have a living hope, the hope that our situation will be better in the future. We have eternal life, and this life gives us a living hope. This hope is the inheritance of all the blessings of eternal life.

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THE WIDE SCOPE OF PETER'S WRITINGS

According to Peter's word in 1:10-12, the first means of the Spirit's application was the prophesying of the Old Testament prophets, and the second means was the preaching of the New Testament apostles. By this we see that two groups of persons were used by the applying Spirit to apply God's full salvation to His chosen people.

When we first read 1:10-12, we may not think that these verses are very deep. But the more we read them and pray-read them and in so doing touch the depth of these verses, we shall realize that Peter's word here is quite deep. One example of Peter's depth is what he says in verse 11 about the prophets searching into the manner of time Christ would suffer.

PROPHESYING CONCERNING THE GRACE UNTO US

First Peter 1:10 says, "Concerning which salvation the prophets, who prophesied concerning the grace unto you, sought out and searched out." Here Peter uses the Old Testament prophets to confirm his teaching concerning the New Testament salvation. The Lord Jesus did the same thing (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46).

In verse 10 Peter points out that the prophets prophesied concerning "the grace unto you." In this verse "grace" is a synonym for "salvation." In 1:13 grace also refers to God's salvation. John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace. This grace is God in the Son as our enjoyment. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." The grace to which Paul refers three times in this verse is the resurrected Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit to bring the processed God in resurrection

into us to be our life and life supply that we may live in resurrection. Therefore, grace is the Triune God becoming life and everything to us.

THE SEARCHING OF THE PROPHETS

In 1:11 Peter goes on to say, referring to the prophets, "Searching into what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them made clear, witnessing beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories after these." The searching of the prophets was the Spirit's preapplication of God's salvation in the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophets were searching into what time and what manner of time the Spirit in them made clear concerning Christ's marvelous accomplishment through His sufferings and glories. Eventually it was revealed that those marvelous things were ministered not to them, but to the New Testament believers (v. 12).

WHAT MANNER OF TIME

In verse 11 Peter says that the prophets searched not only into what time but also into what manner of time. Although it is easy to understand the meaning of "what time," it is difficult to know what Peter means by "what manner of time." This is an unusual expression. Does time have a manner? We may be bothered by this expression and wonder what Peter means by "what manner of time."

In seeking to understand this, we may substitute "kind" for "manner" and speak of "what kind of time." In conversation we sometimes refer to a certain kind of time, or ask a person what kind of time he had in doing a certain thing. You may ask someone, "What kind of time did you have with your father today? Did you have a good time with him? Did you enjoy a happy time?" Furthermore, the kind of time or manner of time may denote a particular season. For example, the winter season is a time of cold weather, whereas the summer season is a time of hot weather. These are illustrations that may help us understand Peter's expression "what manner of time."

Regarding the coming of Christ and His sufferings, the prophets not only searched into what time this would be, but also searched into what manner of time, what kind of time, it would be. A number of verses in the prophecy of the Old Testament indicate that the anointed One of God, the Messiah, Christ, would suffer for the salvation of God's people and the fulfillment of God's

purpose. According to these prophecies, it was necessary for God's anointed One, the One appointed to fulfill God's commission, to suffer. The ancient prophets knew this, and they spent considerable time to find out when the Messiah would suffer. This means that they were seeking to know what time He would suffer. Furthermore, they were also searching into what manner of time this would be. Would it be in a time comparable to the winter season or one comparable to the summer? For this reason, in 1:11 Peter speaks concerning what manner of time.

We have seen that it is characteristic of Peter to use particular and even peculiar expressions in his writings. He speaks not only of the blood, but of the precious blood; not only of seed, but of incorruptible seed; not only of what time, but of what manner of time. Peter's word in verse 11 is not drawn out of the air. On the contrary, what he says is based upon what he found in the Old Testament. Peter surely has a ground, a basis, for whatever he says. His word regarding what manner of time is based on the Old Testament.

Peter treasured the Old Testament, and we certainly treasure the Bible. One striking characteristic of us is that we treasure the Word of God and spend a great deal of time reading it and studying it. Many of us have been dealing with the Bible diligently and seriously for years. Therefore, let me address a question especially to those who have been serious in their reading of the Bible: What verse in the Old Testament tells us the manner of time of Christ's suffering and of His glorification? It is easy to find a verse that speaks of what time. For instance, Daniel 9:26 says, "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off." The words "cut off" point to Christ's crucifixion. Daniel 9:25 mentions "seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks." Here we have a total of sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred eighty-three years. According to these verses, four hundred eighty-three years after the command to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, the Messiah, Christ, would be cut off, crucified. By this we can know what time Christ would suffer. The time was at the expiration of the sixty-ninth week.

Although we have these verses related to what time Christ would suffer, it is very difficult to find a verse that tells us the manner of time. (We shall come to the verses on the manner of time in the

next message.) Verses 10 through 12 are not shallow. Rather, they are deep and difficult to understand. Thus, we should never look down on Peter as a writer or think that he was shallow.

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CONSUMMATE SALVATION

The salvation in verse 10 refers to the salvation of the soul mentioned in the preceding verse. The phrase “salvation of the soul” indicates a full salvation. It does not refer to initial salvation; it denotes consummate salvation, full salvation. Furthermore, as we have already pointed out, in verse 10 salvation and grace are synonyms. This means that grace here refers to God’s full salvation. Many Christians define grace merely as unmerited favor. How shallow is this explanation! The grace in the Bible is not limited to some kind of unmerited favor. The grace in the Bible is equal to full salvation.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE PROPHETS

In verse 10 Peter also tells us that the prophets sought out and searched out. In verse 11 he speaks of the prophets’ searching. All these words indicate seeking. If we read through the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi, we shall see that all the Old Testament saints were seekers. I believe that they were much more exercised in their seeking than we are today. The prophets in particular were seeking and searching into what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them made clear. Let us quote the first part of Peter’s word in verse 11 once again: “Searching into what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them made clear.” The composition here seems awkward. Nevertheless, Peter’s expression is marvelous and has been much used by God. What does this marvelous expression indicate? It indicates that while the prophets were searching, they had the Spirit of Christ in them.

You may be troubled by the phrase “the Spirit of Christ” in verse 11. In 1:11 Peter definitely says that while the ancient prophets were seeking and searching, the Spirit of Christ was in them. We need to consider this matter very carefully in order to understand it properly.

The highly respected Vaticanus manuscript omits “of Christ.” This omission fits in with the New Testament revelation concerning the Spirit. However, the other manuscripts of authority have

“of Christ” in their text. In the New Testament revelation the Spirit of Christ denotes the Spirit after Christ’s resurrection (Rom. 8:9-11). Before His resurrection, the Spirit that is not only the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, was not yet (John 7:39). The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God constituted through and of the death and resurrection of Christ for the application and impartation of Christ’s death and resurrection to His believers. Although the constitution of the Spirit of Christ is dispensational, constituted dispensationally through and of Christ’s death and resurrection in New Testament times, His function is eternal, because He is the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14). This can be compared to the cross of Christ: as an event, it was accomplished at the time of Christ’s death, yet its function is eternal. Hence, in the eternal sight of God, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). In the Old Testament time, to the prophets who were seeking out and searching out the sufferings and glories of Christ, the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Christ, made the time and the manner of time concerning Christ’s death and resurrection clear.

Regarding the phrase “of Christ,” there is, as we have pointed out, some difference in the manuscripts. In translating the Bible, we need to study the manuscripts. Only when we have the proper manuscripts do we have the ground to make a translation. Whereas the Vaticanus manuscript does not have the phrase “of Christ,” other manuscripts do have it. It is right to go along with those manuscripts that include this phrase. The important matter for us to grasp is that the constituting of the Spirit of God to become the Spirit of Christ took place after the resurrection of Christ. This means that the constituting of the Spirit of Christ is dispensational. However, the function of the Spirit of Christ is eternal, for He is the eternal Spirit.

As we have already indicated, we can compare the constituting of the Spirit to the crucifixion of Christ. When was Christ crucified? According to the facts of history, Christ was crucified more than nineteen hundred years ago. But according to Revelation 13:8, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. This word in Revelation 13:8 is according to God’s view. In the sight of God, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. But according to the accomplishment in history, Christ was crucified somewhat more than nineteen hundred years ago. Regarding its

accomplishment, the crucifixion of Christ took place in time more than nineteen hundred years ago. But regarding function, the effectiveness of Christ's death is eternal, and in the sight of God, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. The principle is the same with the constituting of God's Spirit to be the Spirit of Christ. The actual constituting took place after the resurrection of Christ. But the function of this Spirit is eternal.

THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN US

Peter's somewhat awkward composition helps us to see that as the prophets were searching, the Spirit of Christ was working in them. Likewise, if we come to the holy Word with a seeking heart, immediately the Spirit of Christ will also work in us. I can testify of this from my experience. Many times, while I was studying, searching, and even researching the Scriptures, the Spirit of Christ made matters clear to me. Because of the working of the Spirit of Christ in me, I could see things that were beyond my ability to see. Praise the Lord, as we are searching in the Word, the Spirit of Christ is operating within us!