

“They ALL served US.” (5)

We are continuing our sermon series through **Peter’s letters** and already in just the **first nine verses of 1 Peter**, Peter has blown us away as he reminded us of a few of the blessings which comes from being the chosen ones of God. He reminded us that we have been born again into a living hope in **1 Peter 1:3**. He reminds us that it’s because of this hope that we as Christian possess a joy which is inexpressible and full of glory in **1 Peter 1:8**. Today Peter is going to remind us of the salvation which Christians enjoy because of their faith. But before we get into the text let me share with you a short story I heard the other day.

I wanted a light meal before an afternoon speaking engagement, so I went along to a local restaurant and ordered soup and salad. After I was served, I called the waiter over and complained, "There's a fly in my soup." The waiter, looking rather bored, replied: "Quiet! Everybody will want one! Besides, what do you expect for two pounds, elephants?"

Now I guess we all believe that we should get more than we actually deserve at times but when it comes to God, He knows how to give and He gives a lot more than we deserve. We truly are privileged to be God’s children. In our sermon today we’re going to see that we are the receivers of a gospel that was prophesied centuries ago and this gospel has come to us only through the efforts of a very distinguished company of individuals. And as we’re going to see that their efforts to bring us this gospel was not for their benefit but for ours. In other words they weren’t ministering to themselves, but to us who are now Christians.

**1 Peter 1:10+11** “It was concerning this salvation that the prophets made careful search and investigation, and they prophesied about this gift which God would give you. They tried to find out when the time would be and how it would come. This was the time to which Christ’s Spirit in them was pointing, in predicting the sufferings that Christ would have to endure and the glory that would follow.”

Peter says that we as Christians have been **served by the prophets**. He says when the prophets prophesied, they were often intrigued by what they revealed. **But how were they intrigued?** **2 Peter 1:21** “For no prophetic message ever came just from the human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God”.

The prophets were inspired or moved by the Holy Spirit, and not by their own will. In other words even though they spoke the very words God told them to say, they didn’t fully understand the meaning behind those words sometimes. Listen to how confused Daniel was when he was prophesying in Babylon.

**Daniel 7:28** “This is the end of the account. I was so frightened that I turned pale, and I kept everything to myself.”

**Daniel 8:26+27** “This vision about the evening and morning sacrifices which has been explained to you will come true. But keep it secret now, because it will be a long time before it does come true." I was depressed and ill for several days. Then I got up and went back to the work that the king had assigned to me, but I was puzzled by the vision and could not understand it.”

He was confused because he didn’t fully understand what God was telling him. But as time went on he soon discovered he wasn’t serving himself but us even today as Christians. **Daniel 12:8+9** “I heard what he said, but I did not understand it. So I asked, "But, sir, how will it all end?" He answered, "You must go now, Daniel, because these words are to be kept secret and hidden until the end comes”.

Now think about this for a moment, Peter is telling us that Christians have been served by people such as **Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel**. These men and many others spent their lives, and in many cases even gave their lives, in service to you and me. And loved ones we should be in gratitude to them, because they were willing to die to bring us the gospel.

**Hebrews 11:36-38** “Some were mocked and whipped, and others were put in chains and taken off to prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were killed by the sword. They went around clothed in skins of sheep or goats---poor, persecuted, and mistreated. The world was not good enough for them! They wandered like refugees in the deserts and hills, living in caves and holes in the ground.”

Now if that doesn’t remind us that we truly are special in God’s eyes **I don’t know what will?**

But not only did the **prophets** serve us, we were also served by the **Holy Spirit**. Now you might ask well in what way does the Holy Spirit serve us? Well again we need to remember it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets to proclaim things to come. **1 Peter 1:10+11** “It was concerning this salvation that the prophets made careful search and investigation, and they prophesied about this gift which God would give you. They tried to find out when the time would be and how it would come. This was the time to which Christ's Spirit in them was pointing, in predicting the sufferings that Christ would have to endure and the glory that would follow.”

It was the Holy Spirit who inspired David and Isaiah to foretell the sufferings of Christ in **Psalm 22** and **Isaiah 53**. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to proclaim the glories to follow. He moved them to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Psalm 16:9-11** “And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure, because you protect me from the power of death. I have served you faithfully, and you will not abandon me to the world of the dead. You will show me the path that leads to life; your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.”

The Holy Spirit moved them to proclaim His ascension and coronation. **Daniel 7:13+14** “During this vision in the night, I saw what looked like a human being. He was approaching me, surrounded by clouds, and he went to the one who had been living forever and was presented to him. He was given authority, honour, and royal power, so that the people of all nations, races, and languages would serve him. His authority would last forever, and his kingdom would never end.”

And it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the apostles to reveal the gospel. **1 Peter 1:12** “God revealed to these prophets that their work was not for their own benefit, but for yours, as they spoke about those things which you have now heard from the messengers who announced the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things which even the angels would like to understand.”

Now think about that for a moment. Through His ministry of inspiration and revelation in the lives of the **prophets** and **apostles**, we have been served by the **Holy Spirit**. And it's because of His work; we have today the completed revelation of God's Word in our hands, the Bible. And remember we've already looked at the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to which Peter referred to back in **1 Peter 1:2**.

But loved ones ask yourself; **do you and I really appreciate the service that the Holy Spirit has rendered for us throughout the ages? Are these things not telling us just how valuable we are in God's eyes?** So we have the prophets who served us and the Holy Spirit who served us but there is another group of people who have served us.

**1 Peter 1:12** “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.”

Now who are the ‘those’ where he's says, “Those who preached the good news to you?” Those people who preached the good news were the **apostles** of Jesus Christ, so Peter is reminding us that the **apostles** also served us. After all they were the ones who were commissioned to preach the gospel in the first place. Jesus commanded them in **Mark 16:15+16** “Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all people. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

And make no mistake about it loved ones when they were given this great commission from Jesus they saw themselves as servants to those very people they were preaching to. They didn't see themselves as super apostles, they saw themselves as servants, who had different roles to play but were always equal. You know we sometimes look at each other as if one person has a greater role to play than others. That's the wrong attitude church, we may have different roles to play but each one is just as important as the next.

I love that story about the little boy who was flying a kite and he got into an argument with the kite about who played the most important role. And so the sticks said, "I did," the paper on the kite said, “No I did,” the little boy piped up and said “No I'm the most important part” and then the wind turned around and said "No, I did."

But the point of the story is that they all flew the kite together. If the sticks had broken, the tail caught in a tree, the paper torn or the wind went calm, the kite would have come down. Each had a part to play. **1 Corinthians 3:5-7** “After all, who is Apollos? And who is Paul? We are simply God's servants, by whom you were led to believe. Each one of us does the work which the Lord gave him to do: I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plant, but it was God

who made the plant grow. The one who plants and the one who waters really do not matter. It is God who matters, because he makes the plant grow”.

You see loved ones we each have a work to do. If the work of the Lord is to be a success, then all parts must be played by every member of the church. We have the work of planting and watering, visiting, giving, preaching, and countless other jobs to do to make the church and its work successful. But we must all work together and each does what he can to help. It is a matter of teamwork.

And just like the apostles who were working together to serve us when they preached the gospel, we too should be working together to serve everyone we preach the gospel to. Because in a very real way the apostles understood that they were serving as servants of Christ.

Listen to what the apostle Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3:21-4:1** “No one, then, should boast about what human beings can do. Actually everything belongs to you: Paul, Apollos, and Peter; this world, life and death, the present and the future---all these are yours, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. You should think of us as Christ's servants, who have been put in charge of God's secret truths”. He also says over in **2 Corinthians 4:5** “For it is not ourselves that we preach; we preach Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake”.

In other words Peter is reminding us that we as Christians have been served by men. Men like Peter, James, John, and Paul who gave their lives for our sake, to convince the world that our faith in their testimony is not speculative, but that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead.

**2 Corinthians 11:24-29** “Five times I was given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent twenty-four hours in the water. In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from my own people and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. And not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress”.

**Why did the apostle Paul go through all of that?** Well simply to bring us the good news concerning Jesus. Now think about the apostles for a moment. Peter is reminding us that the apostles spent most of their lives serving us. Now I don't know about you but this tells me that all Christians should know that we hold a very high place in God's scheme of redemption as it has been unfolded throughout the ages.

So the prophets served us, the Holy Spirit served us, the apostles served us but before we finish I want to take a look at another group of people who have served us. **1 Peter 1:12** “God revealed to these prophets that their work was not for their own benefit, but for yours, as they spoke about those things which you have now heard from the messengers who announced the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things which even the angels would like to understand”.

Peter reminds us that we have been served by angels. **Now in what way did the angels served us?** Well in two ways, **firstly** they served us in the things they prophesied by the prophets. Remember it was the angel Gabriel who appeared to Daniel and revealed to him in **Daniel 8:9** about our glorious future salvation. **Secondly** the angels served us in the things they proclaimed by the apostles through the gospel. It was the angel Gabriel's again who appeared to Zacharias and Mary in **Luke 1:11-19** to reveal to them about our ultimate salvation.

**But have you ever wondered why they had such a keen interest in God's plan?** Well wouldn't you be if you were being told things to tell others about something in the future which you totally didn't understanding? Wouldn't curiosity get the better of you? Wouldn't you constantly be at God's feet asking what on earth does all this mean?

Listen if I said to you all today I want to have a congregational meeting next Sunday but didn't tell you why, **wouldn't you feel like you've been left out in the dark?** Yes the angels were involved in the process of foretelling and revealing the salvation in Christ. But just like the prophets, angels were also in the dark concerning the details of coming salvation.

Hebrews 1:13+14 "God never said to any of his angels: "Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet." What are the angels, then? They are spirits who serve God and are sent by him to help those who are to receive salvation". In other words, just like the prophets, just like the Holy Spirit, just like the apostles, the angels understood that they weren't serving themselves but they were serving us.

Now with company like that in our lives doesn't that tell you that God holds you and me in high regard? No wonder we want to come here every week and just praise Him for His grace. No wonder we're so grateful that all we want to do is serve Him and His people. No wonder we love Him so much, after all He provided the greatest servant of all, His Son. Matthew 20:28 "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

A government official who came into President Lincoln's office was startled to find the chief executive shining his shoes. "Sir," he gasped, "surely you do not polish your own shoes!" "Of course," replied the humble President. "Whose do you polish?"

You see loved ones; the greatness of a man is evidenced by his humility. In the words of an old Filipino saying, "The higher the bamboo grows, the lower it bends." All of this is illustrated in the life of Jesus. The highest title God ever allows in His church is "servant." The question is am I willing to serve people as Jesus did?

You see I'm quite willing to serve anyone but it's not until I start getting treated like a servant do I know if I'm really one. It's easy to serve when you've got lots of time but ask me to help when I want to watch X-Factor and you will soon find out if I'm a servant or not.

Ask me to help when I really need to cut the grass in my garden, and you will soon find out if I'm a servant or not. Ask me to come and visit you but if it's at two in the morning you will soon find out if I'm a servant or not. Ask me to come and help with outreach but if it's on a Saturday morning when it's my day off you will soon find out if I'm a servant or not. It's easy to serve when you're feeling great but ask me to help when I'm feeling a little tired and you will soon find out if I'm a servant or not.

You see loved ones you won't know if you're truly a slave of Jesus Christ until you start getting treated like one. You won't know if you're truly a slave of Jesus Christ until you get asked to do something which means putting off your own plans to serve someone else.

To serve Jesus is to serve without looking for any kind of repayment. Luke 6:34+35 "And if you lend only to those from whom you hope to get it back, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount! No! Love your enemies and do good to them; lend and expect nothing back. You will then have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked."

To serve Jesus is to serve one another with love. Romans 12:10 "Love one another warmly as Christians, and be eager to show respect for one another".

To serve Jesus is to serve by putting other people's needs first and serving with the very attitude of Jesus Christ Himself. Philippians 2:3-8 "Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had: He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death--- his death on the cross."

Now I know, I cannot die for people to save them as Jesus did, but I can "die to self" to enable me to tell people that Jesus died for their sins, and so serve them in the greatest way possible. When you humble yourself, then God will give you the grace to grow into maturity where, you like the tall bamboo, can lower yourself to serve those of "low esteem."

How tall are you spiritually? Tall and flexible enough to serve people in all kinds of situations? I would like you to listen to the words of this chorus we often sing but instead of singing them I would like for us to pray them. And just think about what your praying for and please don't ask God to make you a servant if you have no intention of allowing Him to help you become one.

Make me a servant, Lord make me like You. For You are a servant, Make me one too. Make me a servant, Do what You must do, To make me a servant, Make me like You.

If you're not a Christian this morning then you need to know that all servants have a master and our Master's name is Jesus Christ. And whatever our master tells us to do; we do it because a servant never disobeys his Master. And if you want to become a servant of Jesus Christ then please don't leave here today without asking someone to show you from our Master's word, the Bible, about how you can do just that.