

THE GREAT PROOF OF SALVATION

2 PETER 01:16–21

Introduction

How do we know that we can really be saved? That the glorious gospel of salvation is true? How do we know that Jesus Christ is really the Son of God, the Messiah and Saviour of the world? This is the subject of this great passage — *the great proof of salvation*.

- I. The great truth: salvation is not a fable; it is the power and coming of Christ (v. 16).
- II. The first proof of salvation: the great eyewitness account of Christ's majesty and transfiguration (vv. 16-18).
- III. The second proof of salvation: Scripture — the more certain account of prophecy or Scripture (vv. 19-21).

I. 2 Peter 01:16 *Salvation, the Power and Coming of Christ*

There is the great truth — salvation is not a fable; it is the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The word *stories* is called *a cleverly invented story*. The gospel of salvation is not a story, not a fable, not some fictitious creation of man's mind. It is not an invention of man's imagination. It has not been thought up in order to give man more...
 - peace
 - righteousness
 - joy
 - goodness
 - love
 - life
 - security
 - justice
 - morality

Man has created great value systems, religions and laws to meet his need for peace, security, hope and life. Some persons even declare that science and technology, education and social services are the answer to meeting man's needs. They think through the problems of life, and with great creative imagination they work out how technology and education can meet these needs. They then put their thoughts in writing and declare to the world that the salvation of man is found in technology and education. They declare that the needs of man for peace, security and life are found in the works of man's own hands...

- in human religion and value systems
- in human laws and good behaviour
- in science and technology
- in education and social services

But note: there is one terrible flaw in all this. Nothing on this earth is permanent; nothing lasts, not beyond this life. The cry of man's heart is for life, for fullness of life,

for completeness, fulfilment and satisfaction. Man longs for life, for more and more life, for security, hope, assurance and peace. Man cries out for an abundance of life both now and in the future, life in this world and in the next world. In addition to the cry for life, man has a spiritual sense of God and of living forever, the need to worship God and to live with Him forever. But man dies and leaves this world. If he depends upon his own man-made efforts to meet his needs, then his efforts die when he dies. Why? Because no man can give him life beyond the grave. He depended upon his own mind and hands to make him secure in the future and in the hereafter, but when his mind and hands died, they were dead. His mind and hands could not deliver him; they were lifeless and powerless.

This means something: all the man-made efforts to save man, all the creations of man's mind and hands that claim to be the salvation of man — they are all fabrications of the human mind. They are the real *cleverly invented stories*. They may be helpful to man; they may meet some needs to some degree. In fact, all great thoughts and acts of men do help to some degree. But no thought of man and no act of man can meet the needs of man, *not perfectly and not eternally*. For all men die. In just a few short years there will not be a single person alive who is living upon the earth today — not a single person. We shall all be gone forever, never to return. No matter how great a thought we think and no matter how great a human salvation we make with our hands, we shall be gone forever. If we are going to meet our needs for life, if we are going to live abundantly both now and in the other world (heaven), then God Himself has to show us how to live and how to get into the other world. God Himself has to show us how to please Him so that He will take us there.

Note: if there is a God in another world, in a spiritual dimension, who has made us and the world, then He is interested in our getting to where He is. He is interested in our living with Him. There is too much good and love within the world and too much longing for Him and for life eternal within us for God not to love us. And this is the glorious gospel: God does love us. He has not left us in the dark to grope and grasp after Him. He has revealed Himself and shown us how to reach and please Him. He has shown us how to be acceptable to Him and to receive eternal life. The gospel of salvation is not a fable; it is not a cleverly invented story of man's imagination that deceives people. It is the truth that God loves us and has provided a way for us to be saved, a way for us to have peace and life now while on this earth and eternally when we enter the next world.

Mat 7:15 “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.*”

2 Cor 11:13-15 *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*

It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Gal 1:6-10 *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

Phil 3:18-19 *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

1 Tim 1:4 *Nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work — which is by faith.*

1 Tim 4:1 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

1 Tim 4:7 *Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.*

Titus 1:14 *And will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.*

2 Pet 1:16 *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

2 Pet 2:1-3 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

1 John 4:1-3 *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

2. Salvation is the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. What does this mean?
 - a. First, it means the first coming of Jesus Christ. God has not left man in the dark to seek and search for peace and life — to see if there is such a thing as absolute peace of heart and such a thing as real life both now and hereafter. Only a *God of hate* would leave man in the dark to grasp and grasp after the truth within a corruptible world. But this is not God, not the true and living God. God is love and He cares deeply for man. How do we know this? By Jesus Christ. By the power and coming of Jesus Christ into this world. God loves man so much that He has sent His own Son into the world to save man. And note this:

=> The fact that God sent Christ into the world to save us means that God loves us, and God has the power to save us. God loves us enough and has enough power to give us peace and life both now and eternally. The power and coming of Jesus Christ into the world proves this.

John 3:16-17 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

John 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

Rom 8:3 *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.*

Ga1 4:4-7 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

1 John 4:2-3 *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that*

does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

- b. Second, it means the second coming of Christ. God is going to reveal His love and power again; God is going to prove His power to give us peace and life by sending Christ back to earth. Jesus Christ is going to come again just as He came before. Note the verse: this is not a “cleverly invented story...the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God has the power to bring peace to this earth, and He is going to personally come to earth to bring peace to it. He is coming again in the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

John 14:2-3 *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

Mat 24:27 *“For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”*

1 Th 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

James 5:8 *You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.*

II. 2 Peter 01:16–18 Proof of Salvation: Jesus Christ’s Deity

There is the first proof of salvation, the great eyewitness account of Christ’s majesty. The word “majesty” (*megaleiotes*) means the majesty of God, the *divine nature* of God (Michael Green, *The Second Epistle of Peter and The Epistle of Jude*. “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 83). It means that the *majesty and glory* of God filled and surrounded Christ when He walked upon earth. The early disciples and believers knew that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of men because they saw the majesty and glory of God in His life and works. Jesus Christ went to great pains to reveal the majesty and glory of God; He proved time and again that He was the Son of God.

Now note verses 17-18: there was one event where the majesty and glory of God was allowed to shine out of Christ's very being; one event where the light of God's glory was so clearly seen that it proves beyond question that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, the very Son of God Himself. What was that event? It was the transfiguration of Christ. In the transfiguration of Christ, the very glory of God was *seen to be in Christ*. Scripture actually says that He was "transformed" (metamorphothe). The word means a change into another form; to undergo a transformation, a change of countenance, a complete change. Luke said, "the appearance of his face changed" (Lk. 9:29). Note how the gospel writers described what happened.

Mat 17:2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Mark 9:3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

Luke 9:29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

Apparently *the glory* of His Godly nature was allowed to shine through His body to some degree. "The glory [He] had with God before the world" shone through His body, shone right through His clothes (Jn. 17:5). Peter said, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty." In John's vision of Christ in *The Revelation*, he described the glory of Christ as the sun which shines in all its brilliance (Rev. 1:16).

The scripture says:

1 John 1:5 God is light.

1 Tim 6:16 [God]... who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

Psa 104:2 He [God] wraps himself in light as with a garment.

Peter, James and John witnessed the event; they had the wonderful privilege of tasting a little of heaven's glory. They experienced the very presence of God Himself and tasted some of heaven's peace, joy, security, fulfilment and perfection. Note that...

- they saw the honour and glory of Christ.
- they heard God call Jesus His Son; they actually heard God say, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Mat. 17:5).

Note also the exact words concerning the voice. The fact is repeated in both verse 17 and verse 18.

2 Pet 1:17 The voice came to him [Christ].

2 Pet 1:18 This voice that came from heaven.

Peter emphatically stresses that they heard the voice from heaven. It was not a dream nor a vision nor a figment of their imagination. A voice from heaven actually called Jesus Christ His Son.

Thought 1. Peter unequivocally claims that he, the other apostles, and all the early believers witnessed the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He claims that they were eyewitnesses of God's great love, that God loves the world and has sent His Son into the world to save men. We either believe or do not believe their eyewitness account. It is that simple: we believe or do not believe their testimony.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Luke 1:1-4 *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Acts 5:32 *"We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."*

Acts 10:39-41 *"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree."*

Acts 13:31 *And for many days he was seen by those who had travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.*

1 Cor 15:1-8 *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

1 Pet 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.*

2 Pet 1:16 *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

III. 2 Peter 01:19–21 Proof of Salvation: The Word of God

The second proof of salvation is the more certain account of prophecy or Scripture. Note three significant points.

1. Scripture is more sure than an eyewitness account. The phrase *word of the prophets* is better translated the prophetic Word (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 157). There are an enormous number of prophecies in the Scripture about the coming Messiah and Saviour of the world. When they are studied, it is clearly seen that Jesus Christ is the promised Saviour. He fulfils all the prophecies perfectly. Therefore, the prophetic Word is a much *more certain account* of salvation. Just by the sheer number of prophecies and their fulfilment in Christ, the Scriptures prove themselves to be a far greater witness to Jesus Christ. (See *Prophecy Fulfilled*, 2 Pet. 1:19-21 for a list of the Old Testament prophecies and their fulfilment in Christ.)

Thought 1. If the transfiguration of Christ had never taken place, the prophetic Scripture would still stand and prove that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. But if the prophetic Scriptures did not exist, the transfiguration by itself would be a much weaker proof that Christ is the Saviour of the world. The transfiguration itself is greatly supported and substantiated by the prophetic Word. The prophetic Word helps tremendously to explain who Christ is and what was happening on the mount of transfiguration.

2. Scripture is to be heeded. This is descriptive language: we are to pay attention to the Word of God, for the Word of God is like “a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (v. 19). What does this mean?
=> The Word of God is like a light that shines in dark places. It shows us how to walk in the dark forest of this world. It reveals the narrow path to follow and exposes the stumbling stones and dangerous pits and poisonous creatures along the path.
=> The Word of God will show us how to walk “until the day dawns.” What day? The glorious day of Christ’s return. In that day, “the morning star [Christ Himself shall] rises in our hearts” and perfect us. Our great salvation will be fulfilled and completed. We shall be transformed into His image, for we shall see Him as He is (1 Jn. 3:2).

Michael Green has an excellent comment on the glorious day when the morning star (Christ) shall rise in our hearts:

“Our inner transformation, deepened continually by the Spirit as we study the Scriptures (2 Cor. 3:18), will be completed on the great day when we shall see Him as He is, and be made like Him (1 Jn. 3:2)” (The Second Epistle of Peter and The Epistle of Jude. “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 89).

Thought 1. The point is this: we are to study and heed, pay attention to the Scripture. We are to study the Old Testament and the New Testament, the prophecies of Christ and the fulfilment of the prophecies by Christ. The Scripture is the light that guides us through this dark and dangerous world.

3. Scripture is not of one's own interpretation (v. 20-21). What does this mean? Verse 21 tells us. Men cannot interpret Scripture as they want. Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture itself and by the Holy Spirit who dwells within the believer to teach him the truth. Note what verse 21 says.
 - a. First, Scripture did not come from the will of man. No prophecy of Scripture arose out of the prophet's own interpretation. God moved upon the prophet's heart and gave him a vision and then the prophet wrote down exactly what the Spirit of God spoke to him. The prophet did not seek to place his own interpretation upon God's Word. Scripture is not of the will or mind of man. It is of God. (See *Scripture*, 2 Tim. 3:16.)
 - b. Second, Scripture was given by the Holy Spirit. Men were carried along (borne along, moved, impelled) by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word *from God*. (*From God* is the Greek phrase, A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 159).

Mat 5:18 *I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

2 Pet 1:21 *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

1 John 5:13 *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

The point is this: Scripture can be trusted; it is the Word of God. Therefore. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. Man can be saved; his needs can be met. We can now have peace and life eternally. Salvation is now available through Jesus Christ our Lord. The proof is twofold: the eyewitnesses of the Lord and the prophetic Scriptures. Both prove beyond any question that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour and Lord of all men. ■