



West Suffolk Epistle



Volume 12 Issue 1

West Suffolk Baptist Church

January 2025

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

Salvation in Scripture



The Bible begins with the creation of the heavens and earth (Genesis 1–2), and it concludes with the creation of a new heavens and earth (Revelation 21–22). Creation and new creation frame the entire redemptive-historical content of Scripture and place it in its proper God-centered context. In other words, the redemption of man is not the ultimate end or goal; it is penultimate. Scripture is not man-centered. It is God-centered. The ultimate end or goal is God and His glory. The redemption of man serves that ultimate goal.

The culminating act of the six days of creation in Genesis was God’s creation of Adam and Eve. But man is not an end in himself. The seventh day indicates that man is created to worship his Creator. God made a covenant with the first man, commonly called the covenant of works. In this covenant, “life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience” (Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2). Sadly, Adam and Eve chose to take the word of the serpent over the word of their loving Creator. They sinned against God and became incapable of obtaining eternal life through the covenant of works (Genesis 3). Their descendants are born in this same condition of utter lostness.

The story of salvation in Scripture begins as soon as Adam falls into sin. Instead of leaving Adam and Eve in a permanent state of enmity with Himself, God tells the serpent that He will “*put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.*” *God then adds this fascinating promise: “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15). This is a declaration of war by God against the serpent, and it is an announcement of grace to Adam and Eve. Everything we read from this point forward is God working toward the ultimate fulfillment of these initial promises.

Mankind initially spirals downward, further and further into corruption and sin, and God judges the world with the flood (Genesis 6–9). The few remaining survivors continue in sin, and God confuses their language and disperses them across the earth (Genesis 11). But then God calls Abram and makes a covenant with him. Among the promises made to Abraham:

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:2–3, emphasis added)

It will be through a son of Abraham that the work of man’s salvation will be accomplished.

The second Adam is the head of a new humanity, and in the greater exodus, He brings His people out of sin and darkness and brings them into His kingdom to worship God, to be in union and communion with God, and to enjoy God forever.



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Ultimately, Abraham's descendants are enslaved in Egypt. While there, they grow into a numerous people (Exodus 1:7). After four hundred years, God tells Moses what He is about to do and commands Moses to tell the people:

Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord." (Exodus 6:6–8, emphasis added).

"I will bring you out, and I will bring you in." This is what God does in His paradigmatic Old Testament work of redemption. When the prophets speak later of a future, greater work of redemption, it will be described using exodus terminology.

During the exodus, God gives His law to His people and lays the foundation for that which is to come, a kingdom within the promised land. The kingdom, however, does not last because of the sins of the kings and of the people. God warns them through the prophets, but they refuse to repent and are sent into exile. The prophetic warnings of coming judgment are not, however, the last word. God promises that on the other side of judgment, He will do a work of redemption greater than the first exodus. He will send a messianic king to His people to save them. He will establish a new covenant and create a new heavens and new earth.

Hundreds of years later, an angel appears to a young woman in Israel and announces to her that her son will be this promised messianic king (Luke 1:26–33). His name will be Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is the One who has come to crush the head of the serpent. He is the son of Abraham through whom the nations will be blessed (Matthew 1:1). He is the promised Suffering Servant who is pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5). He died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), and whoever believes in Him shall be saved (John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

The second Adam is the head of a new humanity, and in the greater exodus, He brings His people out of sin and darkness and brings them into His kingdom to worship God, to be in union and communion with God, and to enjoy God forever. The salvific work of Jesus Christ and its application to His people is one of the most glorious doctrines in Scripture. ~ **Dr. Keith A. Mathison - Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.**



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Imperishable, undefiled, and unfading



What would it be like to have endless riches stored up for you—a future reward that could never be taken away, but that could be enjoyed forever? If you are a Christian, that is an accurate description of the inheritance God has stored up for you.

The apostle Peter used three negative terms to describe the positive perfection of our eternal inheritance: “*imperishable*,” “*undefiled*,” and “*unfading*” (1 Peter 1:4, ESV). The Greek word translated “*imperishable*” (*aphthartos*) speaks of something that is not corruptible, but permanent. The word evokes the image of a land ravaged by a conquering army; so Peter was saying our eternal inheritance cannot be plundered or spoiled by our spiritual foes.

“*Undefiled*” (*amiantos*) means unpolluted or unstained by sin, evil, or decay. Unlike this world, in which nothing escapes the stain of sin (Romans 8:20–23), our inheritance can never be contaminated, defiled, or in any way corrupted. It is unblemished and unstained by the presence or effects of sin (Revelation 21:27).

“*Unfading*,” comes from a Greek term used of flowers. In the context of 1 Peter it suggests a supernatural beauty that time cannot diminish. Peter used the same word with reference to the unfading crown of glory that faithful elders will receive when the Chief Shepherd appears (1 Peter 5:4).

Those three terms—*imperishable*, *undefiled*, and *unfading*—picture a heavenly inheritance that is impervious to death, sin, and the effects of time. Considering the corrupting, damning influence of sin on the world, it is wonderful to know our inheritance in Christ is timeless and will never diminish.

The believer’s inheritance is “*reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Peter 1:4–5). We need never fear the loss of our inheritance, since it is under God’s own watchful care.

Not only is God watching over our inheritance, but He also is doing so in the safest of all places: heaven. That’s where “*neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal*” (Matthew 6:20), and where “*nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever [enter], but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life*” (Revelation 21:27). “*Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying*” (Revelation 22:15). No one will ever invade or plunder heaven. Therefore our inheritance is eternally secure.

Many Christians are confident that God is able to guard their inheritance but doubt that He can guard them. They fear they will somehow lose their salvation and forfeit God’s promises. That’s a popular view, but it overlooks the fact that God does pledge to protect us as well! Peter said, “*You . . . are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Peter 1:4–5).



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The word translated “protected” (*phrouroumenous*) is a military term that speaks of a guard. Peter used the present tense to indicate that we are continually under guard. Implied is the idea that we need ongoing protection because we’re in a constant battle with Satan and his forces.

It is God’s omnipotent, sovereign power that guards us and guarantees our final victory. God, the ultimate Judge, has justified us in Christ, made us heirs with Him, and has given us His Spirit to ensure that the good work He started in us will be perfected (Philippians 1:6). He is able to keep us from stumbling, and to make us “stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (Jude 24). Not even Satan himself can condemn us (Romans 8:33), so rather than fearing the loss of our inheritance we should continually rejoice in God’s great grace and mercy.

Another guarantee of our inheritance is our persevering faith. Peter said we are protected by God’s power through faith (1 Peter 1:5). Faith is God’s gift to us; we don’t generate it on our own (Ephesians 2:8–9; Philippians 1:29). Faith is aroused by grace, upheld by grace, and energized by grace. Grace reaches into the soul of the believer, generating and maintaining faith. By God’s grace alone we trust Christ, and by grace we continue to believe.

Our inheritance is a glorious thing. No earthly thing compares to it. But we can lose sight of it through worldly pursuits and the quest for instant gratification. Dear friends, don’t collect this world’s trash and neglect the treasure of our unspeakable riches in Christ.

No matter what your circumstances might be, consider your eternal inheritance. Meditate on it. Let it fill your heart with praise to the One who has extended such grace to you. Let it motivate you to live to His glory. Don’t pursue the quick fix—some worldly solution to the passing problems of life. This world’s trials aren’t even worthy to be compared with our eternal glory. And always remember that you have Christ, who is all-sufficient in everything now and forever. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

Christ’s Work of Intercession



How can we be confident that our faith will endure to the end? R.C. Sproul teaches that our perseverance as Christians rests not in our own strength but in the ongoing intercession of Christ on our behalf.

Now, when Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny Him, Peter protested profusely, as so much to say in a presumptuous way, “No, never Lord. I will never, ever deny You.” Brings to mind Paul’s admonition, “Let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Because Jesus then turned to Simon and said to him in loving terms, “Simon, Simon, Satan would have you and sift you like wheat” (Luke 22:31–32).



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Christ's Work of Intercession

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Now, think of that metaphor that Jesus uses. The farmer takes his grains of wheat and puts it in a sifter. And to sift wheat in a sifter is not a laborious task that only the strong can perform. It's one of the easiest chores that the farmer can do. It may take time; it may be tedious; but it's not labor-intensive. It's not something accomplished with great difficulty. Jesus is saying to Simon, "Simon, you think you are impregnable. You think that Satan cannot overcome you because you're so strong and you're so secure, that your security in yourself, your confidence in your own strength, is exceedingly misguided and misdirected. Because not only is Satan stronger than you are, and not only can Satan incline and entice you to fall, but he can do it easily. He can sift you like wheat. You're a piece of cake in his hand. Up against the wiles and craftiness and strength of Satan, Peter, you are duck soup." That's what Jesus is saying to Simon.

But what He does not say at the end of that prediction is. "What you have to do, go quickly" (John 13:27). But He says, "Simon, I have prayed for you so that when you turn, strengthen the brethren." There wasn't any doubt in Jesus' mind about two things. The one thing that was certain to Christ was that Peter was going to fall, and his fall was going to be abysmal. The second thing He was certain of is that Peter would be restored. The testimony of history is that Peter, in spite of this radical and serious fall, nevertheless endured to the end. He recovered. He was restored. He repented. He was forgiven. And he then endured to the end.

Our greatest consolation regarding our eternal security or our perseverance, our greatest comfort, comes from the full assurance that the New Testament gives of the present work of Christ in our behalf. We know that when Jesus died on the cross, at the end of that experience, He cried out, "It is finished." And so, we speak of the finished work of Christ, which phraseology is simply a form of shorthand to speak about the completion of Christ's atonement, the finalization of His purchase of redemption for us. His taking upon Himself the curse of God.

But that work on the cross did not end Christ's redemptive work. He had other work to perform after the cross. He was raised for our justification. And when we talk about the work of Christ, we talk not only about His death, but we also talk about His resurrection. And when we speak of the work of Christ, it doesn't end with the resurrection. We talk about His ascension into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God, and there He works as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He works in terms of governing the universe and ruling over His church. But the image of His kingship and His royal labor is only part of the picture. In fact, one of the chief accents of the New Testament in terms of His present work for His people is His work of intercession.

Every day in the presence of the Father, Christ intercedes for His people. So wherein is our confidence in terms of our perseverance? I hope it isn't a confidence that mirrors and reflects the arrogance of Peter—"Lord, never. Far be it for me"—but that our confidence rests in the promise of Jesus' "I will pray for you." ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*



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If you have a birthday or anniversary in January that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner January 2025

Birthdays

*Rick G. (1)
Corrisa A. (3)
Marcie S. (9)*

*Jack B. (24)
Muriel R. (24)
Stephen H. (26)*

Anniversaries

None to Report

Christians and Rulers Romans 13:1 - 14

Christians should recognize that civil government is ordained of God. Government is God's servant to discipline the disobedient and carry out His righteous will. Love is the sum of the Christian's duty. Christian conduct is vitally related to the hope of Christ's return and the believer's ultimate transformation.



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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.