

JOY IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS

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DATE: 16-08-2020

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:6-9

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In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – which is of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

May the Lord add His blessings to His word, and Father, we pray that through Your Spirit, You would anoint each one of us; me as I speak, that the words would be words that come directly from You; and those who listen, that You would anoint them to hear what You have for them. We pray this in and through the most wonderful name of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“In this, your greatly rejoice,” is what Peter is saying. What is the “this” that he is talking about? “This” of course, is your salvation. He says in v. 4, *“We have an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, 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.”* This is the salvation that has started but will be revealed when we finally get to heaven. In this knowledge of this inheritance and this salvation, he says, “to greatly rejoice.”

As I read through these four verses, it is interesting that it talks about trials and being tested. But along with it, almost as two bookends, we see joy: rejoice in the beginning, and rejoice or inexpressible or glorious joy at the end. I found it interesting that trials and all that can be wrapped up in joy.

We need to find out what Peter is saying here. It seems that as we think about the salvation that we have, that we are living through, that is being formed in us and will one day finally be revealed in its fullness and totality, that in the midst of all that, we also go through trials. But then he says, “Don’t get so caught up with trials and think: Oh my goodness! I’m going through all of that!” He says, “No! These trials are really proving how genuine your faith is.” And you think: Okay, so the trials that come are being allowed into my life to prove the genuineness of my faith, and it will finally result in praise and glory for me, when I am finally in front of Jesus, that I have come through all of this well. Then he says that we also continue to grow in love for Jesus, even though we’ve not seen Him. Yet, there is an inexpressible joy in getting to know this one whom we haven’t met but we will meet one day. And boy! What a glorious, wonderful day that will be.

It seems like Peter is capturing all of this in these four verses and saying: Even if you are going through difficult times, there’s a certain joy that must permeate those times that keep us focused on God and help us to grow in our love-relationship with Jesus.

As I thought about those components, suddenly trials seem, in some way, to get diminished. I thought that if just in reading that it happened, what if we were to spend a little time trying to understand it? Can we then look at all that’s happening in our world today, forget the world, all that’s happening in your life and mine and say: I need to put all of these difficulties on a new frame,

a new grid, to be able to view what I'm going through – that the consequence of it will just be inexpressible joy.

So let's just unpack this a little bit. We are saved by grace.

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

SALVATION IS A GIFT OF GOD.

Basically, there are two components to salvation:

1. **It is offered to us** – offered to us by God because of grace, not because of anything that we have done. It is God's grace freely given to us – that God offers salvation to us.
2. **It must be received by us.** We need to receive it by faith.

Peter is saying, "Rejoice in this salvation." We look at salvation and say, "Okay, I'm saved. Jesus paid the penalty and so I'm saved." But have you really unpacked salvation? Have you really looked at what salvation entails? I'm going to very quickly place before us few points that I think would help us understand just how wonderful salvation is. And yet, how profound it is as well.

What does salvation constitute?

- 1) We are forgiven. Whatever our mess-ups, we have been forgiven by God.
- 2) We have been justified. What does that mean? God looks at us as if we are pure, as if we haven't done anything. That's what it means to be justified. When people know our past, and you've done something kind of bad that you're not very proud of, and there are other people who know that. When they come before you, very often you think that the way they look at you is because they know your history. It may be true or false, but that's a perception. Yet, that perception never happens with God. As far as God is concerned, because of the fact that we have been saved, we have been justified. And God says, "I see you like you've done nothing. I don't see your past when I look at you."
- 3) We are reconciled to Him. That means that the fellowship that was broken because of sin that had come between us is gone, and so now, we are reconciled to Him. The fellowship that God intended in the Garden of Eden is now available to us because we've been reconciled to Him.
- 4) We have been redeemed. We belong to God. We left Him because we followed Satan's path, but God sent His Son who paid the penalty and redeemed us. We looked at that in our Wednesday Bible study of Colossians – what it means to be redeemed.
- 5) We are sanctified. He sees us as holy. In fact, He exhorts us to be holy as well. Why does He see us as holy? Because He sees us through the imputed righteousness of Jesus covering us.
- 6) We have new life. Romans ch. 6 says that the old life has passed away and behold, a new life has come upon us – a life that we live under the Lordship of Jesus.
- 7) We are adopted into His family.
I love that little chorus that we used to sing many years ago:

Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist
without the knowledge of Your parenthood

and Your loving care.
But now I am Your child,
I am adopted in Your family
And I can never be alone,
'Cause Father God You're there beside me.
I will sing Your praises.

Did you get that? What the scope of salvation means for you and me? To say that I am saved – that I am adopted, I have a new life, I'm sanctified, redeemed, reconciled, justified and forgiven. Peter is saying, "When you understand your salvation, this wonderful inheritance that is yours, that you'll one day find in totality and completeness when we are with Jesus, when you understand it, there's an inexpressible joy that must be yours.

As you think about these things every now and then – wow! I'm reconciled. I'm part of the family of God. Oh my goodness! I'm redeemed. It just brings up joy. That's the first thing that Peter is saying, that even though you're going through trials, remember that the salvation is huge.

TRIALS FOR A LITTLE WHILE

Then Peter says that these trials that you are going through, they are temporary, for a little while. He says, "In this, you greatly rejoice even though, now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials."

For a little while. That means it's not going to last a long time, that God has allowed it into your life for a particular reason. And the reason is the testing of this faith that we have. We'll come to that later, but for now Peter is saying that it's there for a while. It has a start and it has a finish, and it has a purpose.

In 1 Peter 5:10, again Peter says, "*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*"

So, it's for a period. Don't give in, and don't give up. Just stay the course.

Psalm 30:5b says "*Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.*"

I love this song sung by Joy Gardner:

If you've knelt beside the rubble of an aching broken heart,
When the things you gave your life to fall apart
You're not the first to be acquainted with sorrow, grief or pain
But the Master promised sunshine after rain.

Hold on my child, joy comes in the morning
Weeping only lasts for the night.
Hold on my child, joy comes in the morning
The darkest hour means dawn is just in sight.

So, this difficult time that you're going through has a finish date. It has a shelf life; and when that shelf life is over, it will be over.

TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH

These trials or difficult times have been allowed into your life and mine to prove our faith, the genuineness of our faith. Remember, when we looked at salvation, we said there are two components – one from God and one from us. Our component is to receive salvation by faith. Now when we receive salvation by faith, we need to make sure that our faith continues to stay strong through whatever assails us.

It's just like any prototype that is developed. They say that this particular aircraft can do all of these things. Then when this prototype is tested, it is tested in all of those things, in all those areas and much more to make sure that what the people are saying it can deliver, will be delivered. And so, when we look at our salvation which we have accepted through faith, and we say, "Lord, I trust You with my salvation. I believe in You. I believe that this is something that You have given me, and I accept it." Then there's a testing that happens that God allows into our lives. It says: Let's see how genuine this faith that you have is. How do we get tested? Sometimes God allows it; sometimes God allows Satan to come and test it as well. But all of it to help us to have a better understanding of what salvation is all about.

WHAT DOES SALVATION MEAN TO ME?

A. TRUST HIM

So when we say we are saved, what does it mean for you and me in our day-to-day lives, leaving aside the fact that we are one day going to be with Him in eternity? As we face our everyday lives, how does salvation impact that?

If we are saved, then by faith we have to trust Him, that what He has said, He will do.

2 Timothy 1:12 says, *That's why I'm suffering now, but I am not ashamed. I know the One I have faith in and I'm sure that He can guard until the last day what He has trusted me with. Therefore, I can trust Him.*

Let's unpack that further. I can trust Him, that's part of my salvation. Trust Him with what?

- **Trust Him with my future.**

Jeremiah 29:11 – *For I know the plans that I have for you, they are plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.*

The question now is: As our faith is getting tested, do you still trust Him with your future?

Are you trusting Him even as you go through these days, saying, "Lord, I know that my future is in Your hands. I know He holds the future, and I know He holds my hand. Complete trust in Him. Do you have that? is your faith rock solid in the area of your future?"

- **Trust Him in afflictions.**

In the area of afflictions, do you trust His Word that says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Maybe, the trial that you are facing today is an ailment, a sickness that's assailing you, an addictive behavior, some part of your history that keeps coming back. But it's an affliction.

And again, are you able to trust Him? Do you trust Him and say, "Lord, this is an area of my weakness. But I'm trusting You to let Your strength flow into my weakness." Is your faith holding firm in the area of afflictions?

- **Trust Him in situations and circumstances.**

Maybe your situations and circumstances are not good. Maybe you're struggling with your job. Maybe you're struggling with relationships. Maybe you're struggling with finances. Are you still trusting Him? Is your faith holding firm? "Therefore, do not be anxious," is what the Word says. Are you anxious? Is your faith shaking? Or are you steadfast and saying, "Things are not working out, but I have my eyes on Him and He will take me through this." He says: Don't be anxious. I will not be anxious; rather I will seek first His kingdom and His righteousness because He says everything else will get added on if I do that.

In terms of finances, are you still trusting Him? Maybe you're not getting as much. Maybe, your savings are dwindling. I had such a wonderful testimony that came to me a couple of weeks ago – somebody wrote in and said that they were going through a difficult time. Nothing was working, business had come down to a standstill. Yet, they had said that they would continue to trust God. They would continue to give to God. They were in the habit of giving a certain amount every time the offertory was announced. This time when they tried to give it, there wasn't enough. So he saw how much was there and gave everything, barring the amount that had to be in the account for it to stay open. He said, "Lord, I'm trusting You. This is what I give to you, and I'm giving it." He wrote to me and said that God just honored him. The next week things began to move and everything began to get to a new place – business began to come in, because in the moment where he didn't have anything, he said, "I'm still trusting You." I know the temptation often is to hold back and say, "I've got to conserve it." Don't hold back from God because He holds everything in His hands. He can give you far more than you can ever think or imagine. So, do you trust Him in your finances as well?

B. FOLLOW HIM

Part of our faith and part of being saved by God is not just to be saved but to follow Him, follow what He is inviting us to do, to be, to say all of those things.

- Are we following Him physically? Are you where God wants you to be? has God said, "I want you to move from here to here," and you're still not going. Because you say, "Lord, I am scared. I don't want to do that." God is saying, "Trust Me," and you're saying, "Lord, I can't. That's too difficult. There are too many improbables, too many unknowns." Physically, are you following Him? Is your faith standing firm in this area?
- Mentally, are you where God wants you to be? are you following the path that He has for you? Are you thinking the things that He wants you to think? Are you growing in your understanding of Him? Is there something dynamic that is happening to your faith?

Philippians 4:8 says, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of any praise, think on these things.*

I like to call them the eight-point grid. Are you beginning to think along those lines and dismissing anything else that will come that doesn't fit this grid? Are you following Him mentally?

- Are you following Him within society? The Bible says, *"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify My Father who is in heaven."* Is society seeing the good works that come because you're following His principles in your life?

C. REFLECT HIM

Are you reflecting Him? Is the fruit of the Spirit seen in your life? When people look at you, do they see love, joy and peace and forbearance and kindness and goodness and faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – all the fruit of the Holy Spirit – being reflected for the whole world to see?

Paul says, in Philippians 2:15 *Then you will be the pure and innocent children of God. You live among people who are crooked and evil but you must not do anything that they can say is wrong. Try to shine as lights among the people of this world.* Are you shining, beloved, where you are?

When we look at our faith and are saying, “How is my faith tested?” sometimes we can just let it go and say, “Okay, my faith is being tested. I’m going through difficult times.” But to think in terms of trusting Him, following Him, reflecting Him – in all these areas, is your faith holding strong?

D. GOD WILL PRAISE, HONOR AND GLORIFY YOU

God will praise, honor and glorify you for going through these trials. I wonder if you’ve ever paused to think about that line: “may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Praise, glory and honor! That’s you! Peter is saying that we will receive praise, glory and honor because we’ve gone through the testing of our faith, when we are with Jesus in heaven. It blew my mind! Every time we think of praise, glory and honor, we think of how we give it to God. Now we’re reading that when we come out of this fiery testing, then God will give us praise and honor and glory.

He then goes on to say in vv. 8-9 that we must grow in intimacy with God, *“And though you have not seen Him (that is, Jesus) you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”*

So, in the midst of all this, even though we have never seen Jesus, we must continue to grow in our love for Him. Because I really think that somehow, love for Jesus and successfully going through trials, kind of go together, that even as we grow in love for Jesus, we have what it takes to go through trials and temptations. And if we try to do it outside of Him and we think this is what I need to do as a Christian, we’ll get burnt out. We cannot.

But when we do it with Him, when we embrace Him in the midst of our trials, then somehow, we’re walking in His footsteps. And as we walk in His footsteps and we see the victories that we’re having in this area of trial, we fall more in love with Him. And as we fall more in love with Him, then we trust Him more. As we trust Him more and see us doing even more things, having more victories, we fall more in love with Him.

I think that’s what Peter is saying: “There’s this inexpressible, ‘I can’t express it’ kind of joy that comes in falling in love with this person whom I’ve never seen. But I can’t wait for the day when I will see Jesus face to face.” And yet, that’s the question that Jesus asked Peter, “Peter, hey! Do you love Me more than these?” and Peter understood it. It’s right here in this letter – Do you love Me more than these?

In Revelation ch.2, Jesus talks to the church at Ephesus and He says this: *I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who have claimed to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and endured hardships for My name, and have not grown weary.”* All of this, and yet Jesus says, *“I hold this against you; you have forsaken your first love.”*

Beloved, Jesus has done so much for you and for me. Even as we are studying Colossians, we see that He's brought us out of darkness into this marvelous light. And then we looked at all the things of salvation, all because Jesus loved us so much to give His life for you and for me, and I believe that that itself must create in us a sense of reciprocity, that we must reciprocate love for Him.

As the hymn writer says:

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless sea;
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying "Christian, follow Me."

As, of old, apostles heard it
By the Galilean lake,
Turned from home and toil and kindred,
Leaving all for His dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying "Christian, love Me more."

in our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still He calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love Me more than these."

Jesus call us; by Thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,
Serve and love Thee best of all.

Can that be our response, beloved, that we respond to His call to enter into this loving relationship with Him, to grow in our love for Him, to give our hearts in obedience to Him, and to serve and love Him best of all.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus. Thank You so much for all that You have done for us. Lord, we cannot even begin to imagine leaving heaven, coming to earth, living amongst us, going through pain and suffering and anguish, humiliation, ridicule, being crucified on a cross, giving Your life for us so that we could find life in You. Thank You that You continue to love us and lead us. Help us, O Master, to grow in our love for You, to grow in our love beyond every way that we can imagine. Show us how we can do that for we don't know, but help us so that one day, when we kneel before You and we cast our crowns before You, we'd be lost in wonder, love and praise. So help us, we ask Lord Jesus, in Your name. Amen.
