

Week 3 - The Experiences of Salvation - 1Peter 1:6-9

Scripture Reading: James 1:2-12

Introduction

When we began our walk through 1 Peter three weeks ago we saw that Peter wrote the letter to people much like us
People who were feeling out of place in this world since they had decided to follow Jesus Christ

And last week we began what I told you would be a three-week section of Peter's letter dealing with the topic of our salvation and we saw Peter write about the security of our salvation

In those first two sermons we talked a bit about the difficulties associated with being a sojourner in a place that is not your true home and how our salvation gives us a sense of security here

And, while we touched on the theme of suffering in those sermons out of necessity and because it is going to prove to be a major theme of 1Peter, Peter actually introduces the matter of suffering in the verses we will be considering today

I think it's safe to say that none of us likes to suffer

I think it's also safe to say that we have a difficult time knowing how to handle suffering when it comes to us

There are those who believe that the Christian should never suffer and that suffering in the life of the Christian simply indicates a lack of faith on the part of that Christian

There are also those who admit that, while suffering is to be expected in the life of the Christian, the Christian should sort of pretend they aren't suffering

We should just smile our way through the suffering because, after all, all things work together for good - right?

Let's see if we can come to an agreement regarding suffering - all Christ-followers suffer and suffering stinks!

Experience tells us that the second part of that statement is true and as we turn to our passage this morning we are going to see that Peter's position is that Christ-followers are going to suffer in this life

If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to open your Bible to 1Peter 1 and to follow along as I read verses 6-9
[1Peter 1:6-9]

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

In verse 6 you will note that Peter introduces a bit of a paradox as he combines rejoicing with being grieved

I. Peter's Paradox

Peter begins verse 6 by writing: *In this you rejoice*

So our first task is to determine what he means by "this" and the most reasonable conclusion is that he is referring to what came immediately before the statement

So that "this" refers to the entire teaching in verses 3-5 concerning the living hope and future inheritance that is ours through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

"Rejoice" represents a Greek verb that doesn't appear anywhere in secular Greek writing

It only appears in the New Testament where it always signifies the outpouring of a deep spiritual joy - a rejoicing in God or in what God has done

It means not only to experience a state of great joy but often to the point that it involves verbal expression and appropriate movement of the body - shouting and leaping for joy

This past Christmas season when we looked at Mary's Song - the Magnificat - we saw Mary use this word in **Luke 1:47** where she said: *"My spirit rejoices in God my Savior"*

And in Acts 16 where we read about the jailer in Philippi who was just about to commit suicide thinking that his prisoners had escape and was subsequently saved we read that he [**Acts 16:34**] *"rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God"*

Then in **Revelation 19:7** we read about the future rejoicing that will occur in heaven at the marriage of the Lamb

The chorus of the old hymn, When We All Get to Heaven, expresses this emotion well:

When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!

And the force of Peter's words in verse 6 is that the Christ-follower is *continually* rejoicing in the fact of their future hope

There is an intense "salvation joy" that should engulf the Christ-follower throughout their earthly sojourn

And the way Peter conveys this truth shows he considers such rejoicing a normal, everyday part of the Christ-follower's existence as they consider their future inheritance that is secured by God and waiting for them to be brought safely to it by God

Then we come to the "though" as Peter introduces the paradox that confronts us all [**1Peter 1:6b**]

Though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials

To be grieved is to be caused to be sad or sorrowful or distressed and Peter understood the grief he wrote about

The same word is used in **John 21:17** where we see the Lord questioning Peter as he sought to restore him after Peter had denied him three times

And Peter here says that the grief that his readers would experience would be from "various trials" indicating that they would be multi-hued and not of a particular kind

We saw James use this same terminology in our Scripture reading from **James 1:2**

Jesus told his followers that they would have tribulation in this world [**John 16:33**] and in **Mark 10:30** he said his followers would enjoy many things in this world but they would have them alongside persecutions

Paul wrote to his protégé, Timothy, that *"all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* [**2Tim 3:12**]

After Paul was stoned at Lystra, he said *"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God"* [**Acts 14:22**]

And, as followers of Christ this should come as no surprise to us because Jesus himself suffered in this world as we read in **Hebrews 5:7-8**

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Trials are real in the life of the Christ-follower and trials cause grief

But the trials are only for a "little while"

I once heard someone say that some difficulty they had been through seemed like it only lasted 3 minutes

3 minutes under water!

When we are immersed in a trial and suffering it seems to last forever but in light of eternity any trial we face is only for a little while

And in light of what God has secured for us in heaven, the severity of any trial pales in significance

In **2Corinthians 4:17** Paul refers to the trials we face as *"light momentary affliction that is preparing us for an eternal weight in glory beyond all comparison"*

And Peter says that we are grieved by various trials only as it is “necessary”

Necessary means that our grievous trials are necessary in God’s sight and under God’s divine sovereignty

I believe one of the hardest things to bear is suffering that appears to have no reason or purpose

But the “various trials” that Peter is speaking of aren’t aimless or capricious; they are according to the infallible providence of God

Our understanding needs to be that Christ-followers will only experience grief as it is necessary in light of God’s great and infinitely wise purposes for them

Therefore, Peter shows that simultaneous grief and joy are the normal experience of a Christian life and according to God’s purposes for the Christ-follower

Let’s turn our attention next to the purpose of the suffering we encounter

II. The Purpose of Suffering

Revealing and refining our faith

The natural question on everyone’s mind, if not their lips, when they are suffering is “Why?”

And many believe that the trials of life are God’s punishment for something

Suffering may at times be the natural consequence of an action on our part but it is not God’s punishment because the penalty for sin was paid for by our Lord on the cross

But that doesn’t mean that God doesn’t have a purpose for our suffering because he does

Verse 7 begins with the bridge phrase “so that” that signals we are going to see the reason for the various trials that cause us momentary grief [**1Peter 1:7**]

so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ

In plain English, the trials that a Christ-follower experiences prove the condition of their faith

The trials are for testing and testing reveals what exists

That was the purpose of the tests we all took in school, right?

We had lessons that presented a concept, homework that gave us opportunity to practice and solidify the object of the lesson, and then a test to measure how well we had grasped the lesson

When we go through trials those trials reveal the character or quality of our faith

Peter goes on to liken the process to the refining of gold whereby the gold sample is brought to a very high heat and so that the impurities are burned away leaving only the pure gold behind

So, in a way, the trials are not just to approve but to improve the faith that Christ-followers have will, in the end, be found to be more valuable than the gold of the analogy

Because even though gold is one of the most durable of all substances, it is moving toward final destruction as is the rest of the world

God delights in being trusted and when God’s people are possessive of genuine, refined faith, God will praise them and glorify them at the revelation of his Son, Jesus Christ

We see this idea of God praising his people in other verses like **Romans 2:29** that says the believer’s praise is “*not from man but from God*”

And **1Corinthians 4:5** which says at the final judgment when all things are brought to light “*...each one will receive his commendation from God.*”

Peter returns to this imagery himself in **1Peter 5:4** where he writes about the unfading crown of glory that will be given to the believer when the chief Shepherd appears

Gold is one of the most durable substances on this planet

But, like this planet, it will perish one day while the faith that is pure will not and it will be exchanged for praise and honor from God

What Peter is revealing to us is that God's precise purposes in our present grief may not be known to us immediately and some of God's purposes may not be revealed even when we first get to heaven

Some will only be revealed at the final judgment seat when God lays bare the secrets of our hearts and commends those who trusted in him without knowing why they were suffering just because God is worthy of their trust

Doesn't it make sense that the kind of faith that is considered most valuable by God is the kind that trusts through trials when the reason for the hardship can't be seen?

That's when faith is most needed after all

When everything is going well, having faith is easy but afflictions reveal whether one's faith is sincere and how strong one's faith is, and purify one's faith by removing the dross from it

And revealing and refining our faith is the purpose of the Christ-followers suffering

Still, none of us likes to suffer and we can be tempted to flee from suffering rather than allowing it to do its work

So let's look next at the keys to having joy in suffering

III. The Keys to Joy in Suffering

Focus on Jesus, your salvation, and eternity

We've already touched on the fact that one way to experience joy in suffering is to measure it against eternity

While our affliction seems to be anything but light and momentary as we are going through it helps to realize that none of it will matter when we get to heaven

Last week, I shared with you that it's impossible for us to fully appreciate what heaven will be like because everything we see around us, no matter how beautiful it appears, is sin-damaged and we have minds that are corrupted by sin

But listen to how John described what awaits us in **Revelation 21:1-4**:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

See what that says, God will wipe away every tear, death will be disposed of, there will be no mourning, crying, or pain

There will be no trials and suffering because this fallen world will be renewed and trials will no longer have a purpose

Again, the apostle Paul writes in **2Corinthians 4:17** that our *light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*

Notice the comparisons Paul makes in this statement: our affliction is light but our glory is weighty; our affliction is momentary while our glory is eternal

When our girls were in grade school, Kathy and I took them on a hike while we were out camping

And, because I misjudged the distance around the lake, we wound up taking a much longer hike than we intended

Miles longer...

And as the girls began to tire they began to moan and whine and complain and plead for us to carry them

Until they saw a set of playground equipment on the horizon

It was amazing to see the return of their energy as they ran joyfully to the playground

Suddenly all they had suffered seemed inconsequential when compared to glory of that playground

Imagine what our first glimpse of heaven will do to our memories of the trials of this life

Then in verse 8, Peter reveals the second means of finding joy in suffering is by **focusing on Jesus [1Peter 1:8]**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory

That first statement in verse 8 is amazing as it reveals an amazing fact about the Christian life - we love Jesus without having ever seen him

Peter had seen Jesus and spent time with him face to face but we have not and that makes us like Peter's original audience

The only portrait we have of Jesus is the one painted in the Scriptures and on our hearts by the Holy Spirit and yet we love him

And the fact that the verb "love" is in the present tense indicates that it is an ongoing, continual love

And that implies a moment by moment relationship with the risen and ascended Christ through prayer and worship and through hearing his voice as we spend time in and under the words of the Bible through which he speaks to us

Then Peter goes on to say that even without seeing Jesus with our physical eyes we "*believe in him*"

And the language Peter uses here indicates a strong personal involvement in the act of believing as one fully leans into and rests themselves in Christ - it's a picture of complete, ongoing trust

Likewise, "rejoice" is in the present tense and could be translated as "continually rejoice" and it's the same powerful word that Peter used in verse 6 that speaks of joy accompanied by verbal and physical expression

But I want you to notice something - while Peter wrote of strong rejoicing that could be ours on the basis of our future hope here he adds some descriptors as he says our daily walk with Jesus is cause for even greater rejoicing

He says the rejoicing that comes from our focusing on Jesus is "*inexpressible and filled with glory*"

It's joy that is beyond the power of words to express partly because it defies and is not dependent on outward, visible circumstances making it very difficult to explain to someone who either doesn't know Christ or hasn't experienced that level of joy

And it's joy that is infused with heavenly glory

The Old Testament often mentions the glory of God and speaks of the bright, shining radiance that surrounded the presence of God

And we read of Moses whenever he returned from meeting with God having that radiance upon himself and I have to think that being with Jesus today should likewise show forth as joy even in spite of suffering

Being with Jesus should cause us to show a watching world something of the glory of God and the joy of heaven especially as it shows forth when they see us enduring a grievous trial

Then, in verse 9, Peter says we can have joy in the midst of trials when we **focus on our salvation [1Peter 1:9]**

Obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

What Peter means here is that his readers are receiving or obtaining the goal or outcome of their faith while they are believing in Christ and rejoicing in him

And again Peter uses verbiage that indicates that this is a progressive obtaining of more and more of this outcome to which their faith leads

There are different aspects to salvation that we need to be aware of as we unpack what Peter is talking about

What we have already received at the moment we accepted Christ, what we have obtained since then through sanctification, and what we will receive in the future when Jesus returns

So the “salvation” he mentions has to refer to the full possession of all the blessings of salvation and the process he is describing is the entire process of the Christian life and the gaining of more and more of the blessings of salvation

We know all too well that there is an ongoing untangling of us from the clutches of sin and a continual maturing as the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and we repent

But there will come the day when all of that work will be completed and the goal of our faith, our salvation, will be complete

John sums up this outcome of salvation that Christ-followers will obtain in **1John 3:2** –

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Conclusion

Suffering stinks

But since we have been saved we can view suffering in a whole new light - as a matter of fact we must view suffering in a whole new light for it to have the effect on us God desires

We don’t have to deny that it is real or stoically accept its reality determined to smile our way through the pain

Peter has shown us that trials, as grievous as they may be, are just a part of the process that God uses to sanctify us

And we can rejoice that God cares enough about us that he will take us through trials and suffering to make us more like his Son

We can rejoice just like the apostles in **Acts 5:41** who were arrested by the religious leaders and beat them charging them to not speak in the name of Jesus only to have them leave *“rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer”*

Rejoicing in the face of trials demonstrates the kind of faith that God values and it is easier to rejoice when we remember that:

God has a purpose for the trial

God permits the trials to enter your life

God oversees the trial

God will not allow the trial to go on forever

God will sustain you through the trial and

God highly values your faith that is revealed and refined by the trial

So measure your trial against eternity, focus on Jesus, and look forward to the consummation of your salvation

As the old hymn says:

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ.

One glimpse of his dear face all sorrow will erase.

So bravely run the race ‘til we see Christ.

Let’s pray

James 1:2-12 (page 1011)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.