

“Reasons to Rejoice” (part 2)

1 Peter 1:6-9

If you have your Bible, I want to invite you to open it up and turn with me to the book of 1 Peter, chapter 1. A few weeks back, we began this series of studies through this small New Testament epistle, a verse-by-verse study which I have simply entitled, “Hope Beyond Hurt.” Peter wrote to believers who were scattered throughout Asia Minor, who were experiencing the pain and discomfort of persecution for their faith in Christ. His purpose in writing is to encourage them by reminding them of the living hope that they have because of the living Christ that they serve.

We’ve been looking at these introductory verses here in chapter one, which are chocked full of rich theology that results in doxology found in verse 3—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” It is an outburst of praise from Peter’s lips as he reflects upon the past, present, and future tenses of the believer’s salvation.

The paragraph that begins in verse 3 and goes all the way to verse 12 is one long sentence in the Greek text. The idea that is being expressed in these verses is that Christians have reason to rejoice despite suffering, and we must recognize that even our sufferings are all part of the plan of God. As Thomas Schreiner says, “Suffering is the pathway to a godliness that passes the test on the last day.” And so “rejoice” and “joy” are key terms in these verses, teaching us that our happiness and contentment in life is not dependent upon our circumstances.

God ultimately wants His sons and daughters to find their sanctification as well as their satisfaction in Himself.

A few months ago, I came across a fascinating book entitled, “The Happiness Effect.” The author is Donna Freitas, who serves as Research Associate at the University of Notre Dame. The book is a data-driven study at how people, particularly college students, use social media to craft their images and create their identities. She points out how social media is driving a generation to appear perfect at any cost. She emphasizes how social media ramps up the pressure that today’s young people feel to

be happy and successful. They feel trapped in a constant game of comparisons, and if their lives don't seem as exciting and adventurous as their social media peers, then they can't be happy. She writes:

"I wasn't too far into this research before I knew that this study I'd begun on social media was really about happiness, about how young adults are learning they must appear happy at all times, presenting to the world what looks like the perfect life. Yet in always trying to appear happy, perfect, and enviable, we often neglect the very parts of ourselves that bring true happiness, joy, connection, love, and pleasure. We become afraid of our true selves, of expressing who we really are, with all our flaws and imperfections. We begin to cover ourselves up, to clothe ourselves in words and images that mask the emotions and even the joys that define our hearts and minds... We become good at hiding, we learn to excel at it, and society rewards us for the walls we've constructed with 'likes' and 'shares' and 'retweets'...By putting up these facades, by convincing our audiences not only that all is well but that all is always well, we sacrifice ourselves. By doing such a good job of 'appearing' happy, we risk losing the very things that make us happy...Our devices and our compulsive posting and checking are helping us to flee ourselves. We have become masters of filtering away the bad and the sad and the negative. But in our attempts to polish away these imperfections and put on a happy face, as we try to forget the darker and more tender sides of our humanity, we also risk losing the best parts of who we are."

This pressure to always put forth a polished image chips away at the authentic and honest relationships we are to have with each other as believers. Peter is being real and honest with these struggling believers, for whom there was no 'Valencia' or 'Gingham' filter to make their lives appear better than they really were. But what he gives them is much more solid and lasting. He tells them that true joy and true happiness is theirs in Christ, and no amount of discomfort in life can ever take it away.

We can rejoice even in the midst of pain and suffering, and we don't have to conceal or cover it up. Within these first few verses, Peter mentions several reasons that

Christians have to rejoice, in spite of their present circumstances. We have already looked at three of these reasons from verses 3-5:

1. We are given new birth
2. We are guaranteed an inheritance
3. We are guarded through faith

From verses 6-9, I want to show you at least a couple more reasons that we have to rejoice.

4. We are GRIEVED by trials (1:6-7)

Peter says that Christians can rejoice, even when faced with excruciating circumstances, and this is because our hope transcends our trials. Our happiness and joy and isn't contingent upon the right set of circumstances. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Verse 6 begins by saying, "In this you rejoice." Peter takes us right back to the truth of the first five verses. We rejoice in the truth that he has just explained.

As Christians, we don't have to live on an emotional roller coaster in life that tries to find happiness in the right set of circumstances. Because we live in a broken world, our circumstances are always changing. Think of how this is true:

- You can be rich today with money tucked away in a 401k, only to wake up tomorrow having lost it all.
- You can be in perfect physical health today and feel great, only to find out tomorrow that you have a rare disease with a few months to live.
- You go to work today to a job that you love, only to be sent home tomorrow with a box of your things and a severance package.

Our circumstances are in a constant state of flux, sometimes changing for the better, sometimes changing for the worse. If you stake your confidence or happiness on

circumstances, then prepare for the constant roller coaster of emotions in life. To the contrary, Peter says, “In this you rejoice.” In a living hope that is unchanging.

All of us know what it means to be grieved by trials. The word for ‘trials’ that Peter uses is the word ‘peirasmos’ and carries the idea of testing. It describes a test in which God brings His people through adversity and affliction in order to encourage and prove their faith and confidence in Him.

James 1:2-5—“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.”

Peter tells these scattered and struggling believers that God has a plan and purpose behind every trial that we undergo in life. I want you to see four ways that he described these trials.

First, he mentions trials that are necessary

6a—In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

I like how the NIV translates it, “You have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” The idea is that the trial is not something that is accidental, coincidental, or unintentional. It very well may be something that takes us by surprise, but it is not something that takes God by surprise.

For people who are under the pain of persecution and suffering, the temptation is to view life as spinning out of control. When we hurt, we assume that God is a million miles away. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What Peter is saying here destroys the notion that the happenings of our lives are random events, things that are outside the watchful, loving care of a sovereign God. Rather, these trials are a necessary part of His plan for our lives.

TRUTH: Beware of any theology that makes no room for pain and suffering. When you search the Scriptures, you will not find a single servant of God whom He did not put through the fire of adversity.

A.W. Tozer — *“It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.”*

Some people look at the presence of suffering in the lives of Christians and try to use it as an argument against faith. Why would a good God allow His own children to suffer?

Hebrews 12:6-10— **“For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons...he disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.”**

We think of discipline only in terms of punishment for something we have done. While that may be true in some cases, the ‘discipline’ that God brings into our lives is much more comprehensive than that. God allows trials in our lives, not so much because of what we might or might not have done, but because of what we might or might not know. They become His primary classroom, necessary for our instruction and sanctification.

When you consider what Peter says in verse 6, it almost doesn’t make sense. You rejoice even though you are grieved by trials. This goes against everything that we feel and think. Conventional thinking says that the more uncomfortable our position is, the most unlikely we are to find satisfaction. Yet Peter comes along and says something totally opposite.

Peter is saying that Christians will experience grief only as it is necessary in the light of God’s great and infinitely wise purposes for our lives. (Grudem)

Second, he mentions trials that are multi-faceted

6b—In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

The word he uses is 'poikilos' and means many colored or spotted. It's where we get our word "polkadot" from. The idea is that trials come in all shapes, colors, and sizes. Some come from the outside through things that other people might do to us. Others come through the inside of us, such as our thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. Many of our trials come from the outside, such as when people wrong us or when disease and disaster wound us. They are things that happen to us that are beyond our control. Other trials come from within, such as doubt, depression, fear, and anxiety. The point is that they come in different settings and forms, through different seasons in life, each one tailor made for our own unique situation.

Third, he mentions trials that are temporary

6c—In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

Peter uses the word 'oligos' which refers to a temporary period of time. He's not saying that trials are short-lived, for some endure throughout the duration of one's life. Rather, he is saying that compared to eternity, the trials we undergo are barely a bleep on the radar.

The problem with trials from our perspective is that they are permanent and unending, which really isn't true.

They are momentary and temporary in the grand scheme of things. This is why the Apostle Paul could say this:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18—“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

We fix our eyes not upon what is seen, but upon what is unseen. The painful circumstance that you find yourself in now is only for 'oligos,' for a temporary time.

Fourth, he mentions trials that are purposeful

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.

Our trials are not random, not useless, and they are not inconsequential. The trials that God allows to come into our lives serve a very important purpose. Peter says that the purpose is the ‘tested genuineness’ of our faith.

The word is ‘dokimion’ and describes the proven nature of something. And as an illustration of what he is talking about, Peter takes us into the workshop of an old world master craftsman. There, we watch him go through a practice known as ‘smelting’ which involves the process of applying heat to some precious metal ore to extract its precious quality and separate it from all impurities.

Peter refers to gold that perishes though it is tested by fire. As the refiner’s fire is heated up, the gold is brought to a hot and malleable liquid form. All of its impurities rise to the surface and are removed. And it is said that the ancient silversmith or goldsmith would keep the heat turned up until he was able to see his reflection in the gold.

This is the idea that Peter is getting to here in verse 7. The proven quality of our faith is much more precious than gold. You are more precious to God than gold. Gold is heaven’s pavement, but you are God’s possession. He won’t keep the heat turned up a second more than is necessary. The Master Refiner himself will keep the heat applied to my life, not to make me bitter, but to make me better. Not to weaken me, but to strengthen me. Not to crush me, but to conform me to the image of His Son.

What goal does God have in mind for our faith? Peter says the goal is that it may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. All traces of pride, self-righteousness, and impurity will have been burned away and we will be fully ready to rule and reign with Christ.

The word ‘praise’ speaks of God’s approval as opposed to those who will one day be ashamed at Christ’s coming for their failure to trust Him for salvation. One day, I’m going to hear Him say to me, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Thus, to have the

eternal commendation of my Savior in heaven will be well worth all of the short-term suffering in this life.

The word 'glory' refers to that which is promised to the believer at the coming of the Lord. To see Him and behold His glory is the supreme desire of our lives as believers. We rejoice in spite of suffering because of the glory that we have to look forward to!

The word 'honor' points to the exalted position which one day all glorified believers will receive as the reward for their faith. It was a word often used to describe the attitude of the owed of a valued and precious jewel. Just as the jewel is a precious stone to its owner, so also is the child of God a precious possession of the Lord for all eternity.

Peter's point here is not so much that God is working to transform our circumstances as much as He is working through those circumstances to transform us.

Paul Tripp—*“Perhaps in hard moments, when we are tempted to wonder where God’s grace is, it is grace that we are getting, but not grace in the form of a soft pillow or a cool drink. Rather, in those moments, we are being blessed with the heart-transforming grace of difficulty because the God who loves us knows that this is exactly the grace we need.”*

Note the phrase 'at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' This is a reference to coming of Jesus. By referring to this, Peter is reminding these Christians that God's purposes behind their present grief may not be fully known in a week, in a year, or even in this lifetime. Some of the things that we encounter in this life may never be understood, but it will make sense one day when Christ comes and is revealed in all of His majestic glory. On that day, every wrong will be made right and righteousness will receive its reward.

Some of the divine purposes behind our suffering will only be realized when Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven and commends with special honor those who trusted Him through hardship, even though they could not see the reason for it. They trusted Him simply because He was their God and they knew Him to be worthy of trust.

It is in times when the reasons for hardship cannot be seen that trust in God alone seems to become most pure and precious in His sight. Such faith He will not forget, but will store up as a jewel of great value and beauty to be displayed and delighted in on the last day.

Taken together, all of this gives us yet one more reason to rejoice as those who trust in Jesus, even though we are grieved by trials.

5. We are GRIPPED by glory (1:8-9)

As Christians, you and I have reason to rejoice when we consider the purpose behind our trials in life. But then notice also what Peter says about our focus. Rather than my mind being fixed on the trial, it must be fixated on the glory of God in Christ. We can rejoice when we are grieved by trials because we are gripped by the glory and majesty of Jesus Christ. My mind and heart is to be captivated, not by the trial I'm in, but by the beauty of the One who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The way to endure and even thrive in the midst of life's hardships is to get your mind off of the struggle itself and become fixated with the greatness of God and the future unveiling of Jesus Christ. Look at what Peter says next:

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,

Peter mentions the object of our love

Notice how Peter commends these scattered Christians for the way that Jesus had become the object of their love and affection, even though they had never seen Him in the physical sense. They had never seen Jesus like Peter had. As one of the original twelve disciples, Peter had seen Jesus with his own two eyes. He had witnessed the miracles and walked with Him firsthand. Peter was an eyewitness to the events that had happened in Jerusalem where Jesus was arrested, condemned, and crucified. He saw firsthand the empty tomb and the grave clothes, and he was an eyewitness to the

resurrection. He even had breakfast on the beach with the risen Jesus, and saw Him ascend into the heavens.

It is truly an amazing thing that Peter love Him, but it is even more amazing that these Christians who had never seen Him love Him. Their love for Jesus was evidence of their conversion. It was the result of their new birth. Peter is not commanding them—he is commending them.

Though they hadn't seen Him, they loved Him. And though they didn't see Him, they believed in Him. Literally, they believed 'into' Jesus Christ. It means that He became the object of their faith, the One in whom they placed all of their confidence.

I read about a woman who had been involved in an accident that resulted in pain and suffering in her life. When her pastor came by to pray with her and encourage her, she told him, "I just don't see how any of this could ever serve the purpose of God." To which her pastor wisely replied, "Romans 8:28 doesn't say, 'For we see how all things work together for the good of them that love God.' It says, 'For we know...'"

There are some things in this life that you and I will never be able to 'see' or to understand. But that doesn't mean that we cannot live with confidence. Remember, we walk by faith and not by sight. My faith is in what I know to be true because God has said so and has revealed Himself in His Word. Salvation is believing 'into' the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter mentions the overflow of our joy

Notice what he says was the result of these Christians believing 'into' Jesus Christ: "you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory."

They were being ostracized and persecuted for their faith, and they were hurting. Yet at the same time, their hearts were overflowing with a supernatural, inexpressible joy that was being produced in their lives by the Holy Spirit. Rather than diminishing their joy, the trial was only magnifying it!

The word 'inexpressible' means unspeakable, that it cannot be explained through words.

It is the kind of attitude that would lead **Job** to say, even from the midst of his pain, "He knows the way that I take, and when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold...I have not departed from the commands of His lips. I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread." (Job 23:10)

It is the kind of attitude that **Joseph** had, when looking back on all that he had suffered at the hands of his brothers, who could say, "What you meant as evil against me, God meant it for good. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth." (Genesis 45)

It is the same attitude that **Jesus** Himself had when faced with the suffering and agony of the cross, of whom the writer of Hebrews says, "Who for the joy that was before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12)

If the persecuted believers in Peter's day could live with inexpressible joy despite painful circumstances, then so can we regardless of ours.

Peter mentions the outcome of our faith

Though they had not seen Jesus, they loved Him. They believed in Him. They rejoiced with inexpressible, glorious joy that transcended their circumstance. And why could they do this? Because they were:

9—obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

No matter what they were up against, no matter the hardship, and no matter the struggle, nothing—absolutely nothing—could keep them from the outcome of their faith.

God always leads His dear children along.

*Some through the waters, some through the flood,
some through the fire, but all through the blood!*

*Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,
in the night season and all the day long!*

The word he uses for 'obtaining' is in the present tense and means perpetually receiving. Not simply future expectation but present reality. The NIV says, "You are receiving." The idea is that we are recipients of salvation blessing now, that God wants us to enjoy a taste of heaven now. Yes, we have future glory to look forward to, but we can experience some of that future glory now.

Charles Spurgeon—*"Little faith will take your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul."*

We rejoice now in the fact that the salvation of our souls is guaranteed. So let trouble come! I have nothing to fear.

Conclusion:

Where do you find your joy? What does it take to make you happy? Do your circumstances have to be just right for you to be a content, joyful person? If so, they you've not yet understood what Peter has been saying in these verses. Jesus died and rose again to save you from your sin, but He also died and rose again to bring you His joy.

Nehemiah 8:10—**"The joy of the Lord is your strength."**

He wants you to know the fullness of His joy, to possess a heart that finds contentment and satisfaction in Him, to have a hope that goes beyond your hurt. And to do that, He will take you through His refiner's fire. But when He allows the heat to be turned up in your life, His intention is not to destroy you, but to strengthen you and purify your faith. He wants you to know that there is a joy that no circumstance, no loss, no trial or hurt can ever take away from you. He never wastes a hurt, but always uses it for His greater purpose and plan.

If you are trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior, then know that God is at work right now in your life, and He will not waste your suffering. Keep loving the One who suffered

for you, even though you have not seen Him. Keep trusting the One who is always in full control, even though you may not understand what He is up to. If you have not yet trusted in Him, then know that God has been using everything in your life to point you to your need for Christ now—every single disappointment, every unmet need, every unfulfilled desire, and every good gift.

Christian, as one who is given new birth, guaranteed an inheritance, guarded through faith, grieved by trials, and gripped by glory—lift up your head and rejoice! Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.