

Digging Deeper Suggestions

“Loving the Unseen Christ”

Message on 1 Peter 1:6-9

This is a repetition of basic notes with the addition of further study suggestions. Additional notes will be recognized by the use of this font.

REVIEW

Peter wrote to encourage people chosen by God living among foreigners in foreign places. Peter rooted his encouragement in the truth about their glorious salvation. He then spent the bulk of his letter highlighting how a child of the King conducts themselves in a fallen world. Verse 1-12 focus on our great salvation.

Peter reminded them of the monumental privilege to be born into God’s family and called them to bless God who made it happen.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV

Take some time to bless the Lord for some things today.

Try using Psalm 16 as an inspiration for praise.

Peter called them to bless God who mercifully brought about their new birth.

Through Christ you are believers in God 1 Peter 1:21

You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God 1 Pet 1:23

The accompanying benefits of membership in God’s family are noteworthy.

- A living (continually active) hope
- A secure (imperishable, undefiled, unfading, reserved in heaven) inheritance including complete full salvation, loving family, peaceful dwelling , undiminished relationship with God, everlasting joy, unlimited resources, meaningful activity / responsibility, fulfilling recognition (reward).
- Constant personal protection until all is completed

Take some time to reflect on all the benefits of being a child of the God of the Universe.

Next Peter acknowledge their extreme joy concerning these powerful truths in spite of their present excruciating pain caused by various trials which actually served to demonstrated the genuineness of their trust in Christ. They continued to love Christ in spite of never having actually met Him. They continued to believe in Him in spite of not physically seeing Him. Their joy grew beyond the benefits of new birth in Christ. Their joy flowed out of a loving trust in Christ Himself.

Here's how Peter wrote it.

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. 1 Peter 1:6-9

Several expandable topics jump out of this passage. Peter identified an objective test of genuine faith. Peter explained the nature and purpose in trials and suffering. Peter affirmed the wonder of those maintain a vital relationship with Christ apart from a physical connection. This passage helps provides answers to some relevant questions. What is the true source of joy? Why does God allow trials? How do we know we really believe? Would tangible physical evidence of Jesus strengthen my faith?

“You greatly rejoice in this”

Of course the first thing to determine is what the “this” has reference to. It is most likely that Peter observed the emotional response to the facts mentioned in the previous passage.

New birth according to God's mercy

New birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus.

New birth to a secure inheritance that was imperishable, undefiled, unfading and even now safely reserved in heaven.

Continuous protection of the inheritors by the power of God till the full revelation of that salvation in the last day.

So what was their response? Great rejoicing. Not just rejoicing but great or much rejoicing. Peter used this term three times in this short letter. Interesting fact considering it is a letter dealing with suffering and trials in a hostile and broken

world. Rejoicing is the outward expression an inward joy. It was not a term even used in secular Greek. I guess joy was a foreign concept.

Only the believer has true motivation for joy.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-12

Joy, and the external expression flows out of an eternal perspective on life. This is such a prevalent concept in Scripture that I want to expand on it over an entire sermon.

I will reserve further study on Joy for next week.

A basic thought is this...

True joy is an inner elation due to a positive event or the realization of God's past, present and future working of all things together for our good and His glory that often results in some kind of external expression (rejoicing).

Joy shines brightest when it shines in the midst of difficult circumstances. That is the case here where Peter acknowledges their rejoicing... "though now or currently you have been distressed by various trials."

Their joy came from an understanding of a present and future reality. They were God's chosen and reborn children enjoying present connection and destined for a glorious future inheritance. That truth triggered rejoicing in spite of distressing.

"distressed"

The term means to "distress, be sad, grieve, be sorrowful or sad, experience heaviness. Matthew used the term to describe the disciple's reaction to news of Jesus' crucifixion. Also to describe the response of the rich young ruler when Jesus asked him to give all of his riches to help the poor and follow Him.

Matthew used it to describe how Jesus felt at Gethsemane.

And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful (distressed) and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." Matthew 26:37-38

Three pertinent terms are used by John in one verse.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief (distress) will be turned into joy. John 16:20

It was used to indicate the grief of losing a loved one to death. 1 Thess 4:13
It describes how the Holy Spirit feels about our sinful behavior. Eph 4:30
Our life, as was Peter's readers, is made up of a combination of joyful and distressing emotions as we live life in a broken world. These are two contradictory emotions vying for dominance. They can change instantaneously. Many were elated at the miracle catch in the final minutes of the Super bowl only to be deflated and distressed only moment later by the pass interception at the goal line costing the game.

Sometimes the emotions occur simultaneously. I experienced both emotions simultaneously at the death of my mother. Elated that she was with Jesus free of continued suffering and distressed the sense of temporal loss.

Think of some of you own experiences of joy and distress or grief.

Generally our joy is triggered by some event. Biblical joy can be inspired by an eternal perspective.

True inner joy or elation arises from both an event and perception of an event that often results in an external expression. Devastating inner distress also rises from an event or perception of an event that often results in some sort of external expression. We can experience inner elation no matter the circumstance or event by the realization of God's past, present and future masterful working of all things together for our good and His glory.

These readers rejoiced in the wonder of their secure present and future salvation in spite of the fact that present circumstances were causing distress. Peter identified the stressor or distressor as trials. At the present, they were distressed by trials. The term translated trials has both a negative and positive side.

Peter will have more to say about trials later and how to address them.

For now preview his admonition in chapter 4.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 1 Peter 4:12-13

The negative has to do with a desire to cause failure.

The positive has to do with the desire to prove successful.

The events or circumstances of life in this world can cause either one. Of course Satan roots for our failure.

God intends our growth and success. Satan seeks to cause our failure. God intends to explore our weakness.

James 1 is also helpful. Take some time to learn what he has to say.

Peter included three qualifying facts regarding these troubling trials.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 1 Peter 1:6

First, trials are temporary.

I know life's distressing events can feel like they are permanent. By nature, storms pass in time. Even if it lasts you whole earthly life, they are temporary in light of eternity. Listen to Paul's perspective in relations to time.

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Rom 8:18

Consider what Paul identifies as light and momentary trials.

Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Follow Paul's attitude through Philippians. How did he respond to the suffering he was experiencing.

David affirmed...

God's His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5

What they faced was temporary.

Second, trials are necessary.

Peter touched on the Divine purpose of trials in the next verse. Life's trials serve a number of purposes in the divine scheme of things. The digging deeper section will provide additional passages to explore. For now, here is a list of some of those.

- They encourage purity and maturity (growth)
- They cultivate compassion for others
- They teach us to trust God alone (tests my faith)
- They are the means to glory and blessing
- They help spread the Word
- They bring glory to God
- They encourage obedience

Here are the passages that go along with these points.

➤ **Trials Produce Purity and Maturity**

According to Heb 2:10, Jesus was perfected through suffering.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.
Heb 2:10

We too learn obedience and develop maturity through suffering.

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Rom 5:3-5

Without tension, stress, and trial there is no growth.

Just as we need gravity to develop properly physically, we need the pressure of trials to develop spiritually.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Jam 1:2-4

Joni Earikson Tada, well acquainted with what it means to suffer, put it very well.

"When God brings suffering into your life as a Christian, be it mild or drastic, He is forcing you to decide on issues you have been avoiding. He is pressing you to ask yourself some questions."

God allows suffering to get us to take a look at some areas in our life just as He allowed Israel to come under oppression to bring them to repentance. God is much more concerned with our spiritual maturity and purity than He is with our physical or financial well being. He is more interested in our holiness than our happiness. For only when we practice true holiness will we perceive genuine happiness.

Suffering is a means to purity and maturity.

Suffering, when resisted, can also lead to deeper sin and stunted growth.

➤ **Cultivates Compassion for others**

2 Corinthians speaks to this point as it confirms that the degree of intensity of suffer is always matched by equal comfort.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

1 Corinthians 12:26 reminds us that no member of the body is an island. The suffering of one affects everyone else as well whether we know and feel it or not. As we learn to respond to suffering and to continually trust the Father, we can be effective instrument in the hand of the Father to help others. If we fail to respond to the trials, we become a stumbling block to the suffering of others and rather than cultivate a compassionate spirit we develop a critical/ cynical spirit born out of bitterness toward God.

➤ **Teaches To Trust In God's power Alone**

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened

that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. 2Co 1:11

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2Co 4:7

➤ **Suffering is the Path to Personal Glory and Blessing**

*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor **because** he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. Heb 2:9*

*For our light and momentary troubles are **achieving for us an eternal glory** that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2Co 4:17*

*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are **blessed**, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 1Pe 4:14*

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Rom 8:18

In 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 - 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. 1Pe 1:6-7

➤ **Spreads the Word of God**

Often times God must use persecution and such to get His people to go where He wants His word taken.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Act 11:19

Paul stated that his affliction caused the Word to spread to many.

All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. 2Co 4:15

➤ **Brings glory to God**

➤ **Discipline**

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are

illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Heb 12:9-11

Third, trials are diverse.

Peter used a term indicating multi-colored or variegated. Life presents a variety of distressing events to manage and address. Each one exercises a different part of our life needing strengthening. There is not a one size or type that fits all. Peter addressed a number of specific things causing them distress and how to respond from a godly perspective later in the letter.

James used the same word.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials... James 1:2

James indicated that there are times that we sometimes encounter distressing events through no fault of our own.

Sometimes life becomes distressing due to our own foolishness.

The foolishness of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the LORD. Proverbs 19:3

Don't blame God when stuff goes bad. Some of it is our own doing.

These believers experience joy and expressed it with great rejoicing by understand the wonder of their present and future salvation. Understanding the glory of being a child of God should ALWAYS elicit joy.

So why are these trials necessary?

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. 1 Peter 1:7

Trials serve to test the genuineness of our faith. What is being tested? Faith! Faith is trust in something.

One translated had difficulty translating for a particular people group. Finally he ended up translating it “putting you full with on”. Let's look at this at a strictly human level. How do you really know if you trust in someone or something? You are willing to put you full weight on it.

Do you really trust the bank if you never deposit and money?

Do you really trust the chair if you never sit on it?

Do you really trust the car if you never drive it anywhere?

You get the idea. Do you really trust Jesus if you crash and burn when trials hit.

Many are like the group in the parable of the sower.

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. Luke 8:11-15

Which soil are you? The seed is the same. It is the ground that makes the difference.

If the soil is rich, we can withstand external circumstances.

Paul maintained his faithfulness in all kinds of external stress.

Peter reminded the suffering scattered saints that trials serve to test the genuineness of faith, for only genuine faith genuinely saves. Such genuine faith is more valuable than gold because it stands the fire of testing.

Genuine faith will result in praise, glory and honor at the return of Jesus. An inadequate understanding and preaching of the gospel has been perpetuated for far too long. Many have been convinced that they are Christians and therefore entitled to all the glorious heritage of God's children. Only divinely generated new birth brings people into the family of God. It is by invitation only.

There will be some who thought they were family members but not.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ Matthew 7:21-23

How we respond to the various trials of life clearly expose the genuineness of our faith. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to test themselves. Trials test genuine faith. We ourselves are encouraged to test the genuineness of our own faith.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13:5

Peter affirmed his confidence in the genuineness of the reader's faith.

and though you have not seen Him, 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. 1 Peter 1:8-9

These followers of Jesus did so without ever having actually meeting Him personally. Peter recognized the ongoing love for Jesus. These followers still had no physical evident of Jesus but still believed in Him.

This love and belief generated great rejoicing because of inexpressible and glorious joy. This genuine faith continually manifested in a growing salvation and life change.

Application

Some say that if Jesus would just appear to them they would believe. Jesus was clear.

Jesus said to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29

He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" Luke 16:31

I am very interested in the possibility that a clear test of faith has to do with the presence of joy in the midst of distress or in spite of struggle. We will explore the key place of joy in the true believer's life more next week.

Does your faith stand the test of trials? Have you lost your joy? This whole section started with an admonition to bless God for the high privilege of being included in His family to the point where joy inexpressible and glorious wells up in the depths of the soul in spite of various distressing life challenges.