

## I PETER

Rejoicing and Suffering

August 26, 2012

### I. Protected By God's Power Through Our Faith (I Peter 1:5)

A. **I Peter 1:3-9** . . . *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, [5] who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, [7] so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; [8] 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, [9] obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

### B. Pray

### II. Rejoicing

A. **I Peter 1:6a** . . . In this you greatly rejoice

1. The "In this" refers to our salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.
  - a. According to more modern theology, that is, the theology of our day, we experience salvation in two parts – immediate salvation and future salvation. It is the future salvation that Peter is pointing to when he says "IN THIS" you greatly rejoice.
  - b. According to the teaching of current theology, our first experience with salvation is when we come to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. It is at **this moment of faith** that we are immediately born again and destined to eternal salvation with God. It is this part of salvation that is referred to as **immediate salvation**.
  - c. When we die and pass from this life to the next, we will go to be with God in His eternal kingdom. However, this is not what Peter is referring to as the salvation yet to be revealed in the last time.

- (1) We believe that when we die, we go to heaven. But we also believe that one day Jesus will come again, and when He does, that will mark the end of time.
  - (2) Then, all God's people, as a unified community, will receive their due rewards and their eternal inheritance, and they will begin to dwell in the visible presence of God and His son, Jesus Christ, in the place God has prepared for His people. This as **ultimate salvation**, and this ultimate salvation is what Peter refers to as the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
2. According to the words Peter uses, the inference is that Christians naturally and greatly rejoice in this ultimate salvation.
  - a. And surely, eternal salvation is wonderful beyond our ability to fully comprehend it and hence describe it.
  - b. However, it seems to me that the general trend among the Christians of our day is that we are more excited about earthly things and being here, than going there.
  - c. Therefore, I think it is wise to take a few moments and talk about what it takes to be a Christian who naturally rejoices greatly over the expectation of our salvation which is yet to be revealed.
- B. As Peter infers, the Christian's natural response to the expected eternal salvation is to greatly rejoice. So what would help us have this attitude and natural exuberance over leaving this world and living in God's personal and visible presence for ever and ever?
  1. The first and foremost place to look when considering what excites us, and what draws us forward toward some particular goal, and what drives rejoicing in us, is at what we value and what we treasure.
  2. Now the reason for examining our values and treasures is because what we value or treasure determines what we are drawn to, what we look forward to, and what we believe will satisfy us when we obtain our goal.
  3. For example, if we value salvation because it gets us out of spending eternity in hell, we will look forward to being in heaven one day, and we will give testimony to our joy over going to heaven one day, but most likely, we will **not** be in a rush to get there. In other words, when it comes to rejoicing, we are more likely to greatly rejoice over parts of life here while rejoicing a bit less than that about moving on from here to life with God there.
  4. So how do we have a godly rejoicing over going there?

- C. The apostle Paul spoke several times of life here and life there in relation to his own values and treasures. Consider his words as possible ways for us to think about eternity with God.
1. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul said: “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven” (**2 Corinthians 5:1-2**).
  2. Paul went on to say: “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in this body we are absent from the Lord—[7] for we walk by faith, not by sight—[8] we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (**2 Corinthians 5:6-8**).
  3. And finally, Paul said to the Christian’s in Philippi, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. [22] But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. [23] But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; [24] yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake” (**Philippians 1:21-24**).
- D. What do you value? What treasures do you hold dear? Do your values and treasures tie you to this life more than to the next, or do they drive you to long for the salvation that is yet to be revealed in the last time?
1. Paul said we are to set our mind on the things above, not on the things that on the earth (**Colossians 3:2**). This is not a natural way of thinking for us earthlings. But it can become natural for those of us who are born again.
  2. If you want to think more and more this way, if you want to naturally rejoice greatly in the salvation yet to come, consider these suggestions:
    - a. Fight off letting this earthly life take so much of your attention that you lose sight of God as your most precious treasure. Keep God foremost in your thoughts, desires, choices, and behavior.
    - b. Concentrate more and more on God – until it is natural for you to turn or return to thinking of Him, often, throughout your day.
    - c. Concentrate on talking with God, throughout your day.
    - d. Focus on God’s presence in our daily life – until it is natural to expect and sense His presence all day long.
    - e. Persevere at doing your part in putting away those things that distract your attention from God and pleasing God.

- f. Work at loving God with all your being – until you do.
- g. Continue all these things until you so treasure God and godliness that you greatly rejoice over the prospect of leaving this world and living with God in His world, forever.

III. Suffering is the path to great faith and whole-hearted, whole-life godliness. Therefore, suffering produces a spiritual profit that ought to be treasured by all God's people.

A. **I Peter 1:6b-7** . . . In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, [7] so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1. As we look at these two verses, I urge you to keep in mind that the Christian perspective of suffering is based on valuing, treasuring, and loving God, longing for godliness, and wanting the salvation of the lost. In other words, Christians count it all joy when they encounter various trials **because** they value the eternal over the temporal, God over themselves, God's will over personal happiness or ease of life, spiritual growth over more of what this world has to offer, and knowing God intimately over everything else.
2. The truth is, if we treasure the wrong things, we will long for relief when trials come, which means suffering will not produce spiritual benefits in our life, and hence hard times will be wasted on us.
3. Now without question, the Christian life can be hard – what with its troubles, trials, sufferings, sickness, losses, and persecution. So though we may be greatly rejoicing over what is to come and greatly rejoicing over the spiritual profit gained from going through hard times, the hard times themselves are still difficult, and sometimes very painful, even if only temporarily.
4. This truth should not discourage us, but further prepare us for the hard times by showing us the value of endurance and perseverance for going through the hard times. .

B. **I Peter 1:6b** . . . Even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials

1. First of all, notice that trials are not forever. Nor does God deem them necessary all the time. Indeed, God also gives times of refreshing and relief and change and outward peace and physical comfort and healing, and many other blessings of that sort.

- a. My point here is that we are wise to make the most of the hard times – gaining every bit of learning and growth and glory for God that we can.
  - b. Of course, it is not always easy to make the most of something hard, so if you are finding it difficult, examine your values and treasures. If they are earthly, they will motivate ungodly attitudes toward testing, trials, and suffering. If they are heavenly, they will motivate godly attitudes. One set of attitudes will help you go through hard times. The other will compel you to avoid or seek relief from hard times.
2. Peter adds to his words about trials being for a little while the words, “IF NECESSARY.”
- a. Who determines what trials and tribulations, what sicknesses and sufferings, or what persecution is necessary? God decides! We are His servants. He is our Lord and Master, our Supreme Being. Nurture this kind of thinking, because it is too common, even within the church, to treat God as if He is here to serve us.
  - b. As our Lord and Loving Father, God uses trials and suffering for the purpose of further transforming us. What is more, it is the hard times of life that give us practical experience in relation to the lessons we are learning – a practical experience that not only refines the application of the lessons learned, but also builds our confidence that God’s way is the only right, worthwhile, and needful way.
  - c. However, some bring added trials upon themselves through foolish choices and sinful behavior. I say added because they are adding “reaping what they have sown” on top of God’s normal disciplinary work in educating and training and changing them.
    - (1) I suspect you agree there is no wisdom in making your life harder than it needs to be, or already is.
    - (2) And so I urge each of us to examine his or her life to see if you are adding woes on top of hard times by knowingly and persistently living in ways that are contrary to God’s ways.
3. And then Peter adds, “you have been distressed by various trials,” which simply means:
- a. We personally experience a variety of trials,
  - b. and as we know from observation, others experience a variety of trials, and some of them are different from what we have and are experiencing. In other words, every Christian does not

experience the same set of trials. And this reality is a good reminder of how wise God is in His dealings with each one of us.

- C. **I Peter 1:7** . . . so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
1. Peter says here that our faith is more precious than gold that has been purified over a hot fire. How is it that our faith is this precious?
  2. The Christian life, in one way, is a life of faith in God. Wherever we depart from faith in God, it is because we distrust God. Wherever we distrust God, we turn to faith in ourselves or in someone or something other than God. Wherever we put faith in someone or something other than God, we move away from God and toward seeking from our flesh, the world, and the devil the things, or at least an imitation of the things, we ought to be seeking from God.
    - a. Consider, the serpent encouraged Eve to question God's goodness, and once Eve nurtured the seed of distrust toward God, she found it easy, and even wise to eat from the forbidden tree.
    - b. Adam, when questioned by God about why he ate the forbidden fruit blamed Eve. Why? One reason is that he did not trust that God's way of dealing with him would be best for him.
    - c. Abraham claimed his wife was his sister because he did not trust God to protect him while traveling through certain kingdoms.
    - d. David sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband, because he did not trust God to satisfy his needs.
  3. And we could go on and on. Look at your own life. Wherever faith in God breaks down and distrust rises up, you move away from God toward that which seems better to you – even though it means feeding your flesh, pleasing the world, and serving the devil.
  4. However, the other side of distrust of God is shown in **Hebrews 11**, where we read about the godly folks who lived a life of faith. What they did, they did by faith in God, and because of their faith in God. And we can do the same!
  5. The point here is that faith in God is of such great value because it is a vital foundational rock for godly living in every area of life. It is an anchor in the storms of life. It is the lens through which we see God, ourselves, and the world – and make godly choices in light of what we see, or in spite of what we see. And for reasons such as these, our faith is more precious than all the purified gold in the world.

6. But the faith Peter is talking about is not just worth more than gold, it brings great reward. By our faith, we will reap praise and glory and honor when Christ comes again. What greater reward is there than to know that the God of the universe, the creator of all mankind, and your loving Heavenly Father is genuinely pleased with you?

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. God both brings and allows trials and suffering to come our way. His initial purpose is to test our faith. His larger purpose is to further transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ so that our life of faith will result in praise, glory, and honor at the return of Christ.
- B. Of course, a test is only a test if it challenges our current level or strength of faith in God – which includes challenging our knowledge of God, our understanding of godliness, and our present ability to live a godly life.
- C. So do not expect “faith proving hard times” to be easy. They will require great effort and concentration and perseverance on your part. But also, do not fear them, because God is with you and His power for passing the test is already available to you. Therefore, treasure hard times because they bring you great spiritual profit.
- D. And once again, what we value or treasure is vital to how we see life’s trials and suffering. To get the most out of your trials and suffering, you must value them for where they are taking you and how they are transforming you.