

Inexpressible Joy

1 Peter 1:6-9; January 19, 2020

Last week Tanner preached through verses 3-5 and challenged us to let our tomorrow empower our today. The living hope, the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading and the salvation to come should empower our today. In our passage today, Peter is going give us another way that our tomorrow should impact our today: it should produce inexpressible joy.

What is joy? A source or cause of great pleasure, happiness or delight.

Blaise Pascal, the great French mathematician, physicist and philosopher once wrote: “All men seek happiness. This is without exception...This is the motive of every action of every man” (Blaise Pascal).

The longer I live, the more I agree with Pascal. We all long for joy and happiness and this is what drives us in life. The reason that I’m a Christian, is because I see over and over in the Scriptures that God is the true source of full and eternal joy (cf. John 15:11; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22).

*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.
(John 15:11 ESV)*

Transition: But what Peter raises in our text today is the relationship between our joy in Christ and the trials and sufferings we face in this world. In other words, can I still find joy even in the midst of suffering and trials?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9

The answer that we see Peter give to our question is “yes” and what Peter calls them to do is the challenge for all of us today:

The Point: Cultivate inexpressible joy even in the midst of suffering.

Peter gives us two main ways we can cultivate inexpressible joy even in the midst of suffering:

Transition: The first way is to...

I. Look to the Future Salvation to Come (6, 8-9).

Peter begins this section with these words: “In this you rejoice...” (6).

- “This” reaches back to the entire content of vv. 3-5 focusing on our end-time hope (our tomorrow) as the grounds for our joy today.
 - Living Hope
 - Inheritance: imperishable, undefiled and unfading.

- Final Salvation
- Your today should be full of joy because of the certain hope of tomorrow.

Transition: we see this same reasoning in verses 8-9.

Peter returns to the theme of rejoicing (8-9).

- Love: “Though you have not seen him, you love him.”
 - They had never laid eyes on the historical Jesus as Peter had yet they had a deep love and affection for Jesus. He was very precious to them.
- Faith: “Though you do not *now* see him, you believe in him”
 - Again, Peter repeats the same phrase but adds the word “now.” He’s giving us some clues. “Now” here conveys the idea of “not yet.” They haven’t yet seen him but there is an anticipation that they will see him one day.
 - They believed in him: his life, death and resurrection.
- Joy: “...and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”
 - “Inexpressible”
 - Only use of this word in the NT.
 - Some translate it as “indescribable” (NET).
 - Words are inadequate to explain the fullness of joy that Jesus brings. There’s nothing in this world that can compare.
 - “Filled with glory”
 - Glory is a word we use to describe things that are indescribable:
 - God is glorious.
 - You go on a hike in the White Mountains or let’s say you drive to the top of Mt. Washington to get your bumper sticker; when you get to the top, how do you describe what you see? It was glorious.
 - “The joy believers experience is a taste of heaven, an anticipation of the end” (Schreiner).
 - This is the joy that the gospel brings.

Apologetic Sidebar:

- If you’re here today and you wouldn’t call yourself a Christian yet but would say you’re exploring or at least open, you’re probably hearing what I say and fall into one of two groups:
 1. Your life is miserable. You have very little joy or happiness. You’re longing for something give you meaning and joy in life. Come to Jesus today. Throw yourself on him. Cry out to him. Believe in him.
 2. But in this other group you might describe yourself as relatively content, satisfied and happy in life. For the most part, your life seems just fine without God. You don’t need this salvation to give you joy in life. What would I say to you:
 - There’s more to life than earthly happiness and temporal joy.
 - Earthly happiness is great but fleeting.

- Earthly pleasure promises more, but then often disappoints.
- Temporal joy is a pointer to something greater, not an end in itself.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11 ESV)

- Fullness = joy that doesn't disappoint
- Forevermore = pleasure that is not fleeting

Transition: this is astounding what Peter notes:

- Suffering didn't crush or destroy these believers or even make them miserable. Their outward circumstances were very grievous (v. 6) but inwardly they will full of love, faith and inexpressible and glorious joy.
- How could they live with such love and joy for someone they had never seen? Verse 9 gives us our answer.

Peter returns to the theme of rejoicing (8-9) - continued

- "...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."
 - "Obtaining"
 - Another way to say this would be to say: "receiving." Peter is referring to a present reality.
 - What is it they are receiving?
 - "...the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."
 - "Souls" refers to the whole person (body and mind).
 - "Salvation" takes us back to verses 3-5.
 - What's so great about salvation? See 1 Peter 3:18
 - We get to be with God.
 - They had not seen Jesus with their physical eyes but one day they would see Jesus (cf. 1:7, 8).
 - "The outcome of your faith"
 - The reason they were filled with such love and joy for Christ today was because they looked and fixed their eyes on the salvation to come.
 - They saw Jesus as the one who secured for them an eternal salvation and the hope of that salvation brought them great joy in the present, even in the midst of suffering.
 - The greatness of their eternal reward made their present suffering seem small in comparison (cf. Matt. 5:11-12; Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).
 - Though they didn't see Jesus now, they did see Jesus with the eyes of faith (cf. John 20:29).
- No matter what sufferings or trials I may face, nothing can keep me from seeing and enjoying Jesus forever. I can look past these momentary sufferings and take heart in the

sure future that is to come.

Transition: the second way we can cultivate inexpressible joy is to...

II. Recognize God's Good Design for Suffering (6-7).

This is different than the first truth. In the first truth, we look beyond our sufferings to the hope to come which produces joy that strengthens us to persevere and endure the temporary sufferings we face. This second truth is about how sufferings and trials are a part of God's design and plan to increase our joy and delight in him and prepare us for the salvation to come.

- “If necessary” (v. 6).
 - The point here is that the sufferings they are experiencing are part of the will of God for believers. See 1 Peter. 4:19

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Pet. 4:19 ESV)

- This is the consistent teaching in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:9; John 15:20; Acts 14:21-22; Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4).
- And to be clear, the suffering and trials the Peter most often addresses are those that stem from living a distinctly Christian lifestyle.
- What trials do you face as a result of being a follower of Jesus?
 - Workplace or social isolation.
 - You're excluded from social experiences or community-based organizations because you're perceived or assumed as being odd or not fitting.
 - Direct or indirect mocking or jeers from others due to going against the cultural grain on...
 - Sexual ethics
 - Language
 - Materialism
 - Substance abuse
 - Integrity and honesty
 - Comments from family because of your decision to prioritize proximity to RHC and Medford:
 - Living in Medford; buying a home in Medford
 - When you “seek first the kingdom of God,” it looks like folly to this world (cf. 1 Cor. 15).
- Just because sufferings are part of God's will, it doesn't mean that...
 - This doesn't minimize the evil actions of others who inflict suffering (cf. Acts 2:23).
 - Sufferings are supposed to be enjoyable in and of themselves. There's

nothing intrinsically joyful about suffering. Suffering is painful. It causes grief (v. 6).

- The point is that suffering is valuable because of the benefits it brings (so Thomas Schreiner).

What benefits does suffering bring? Why is it a part of God’s plan? Verse 7 answers this for us.

- Peter explains God’s design in suffering by comparing it to gold.
 - The characteristics of gold
 - Gold is valuable and precious, but it is temporary and perishes.
 - Faith: approved faith is of more value even than gold.
 - The testing and refining of gold
 - Gold is refined and proved through fire. When gold is heated and melted down, the impurities that ruin its value would separate and either be burned up or removed, leaving the real gold intact.
 - Faith: in the same way, your faith is refined and purified through the fire of suffering.
 - “Sufferings function as the crucible for faith” (Thomas Schreiner).

1. Suffering authenticates our faith.

- “The tested genuineness of your faith”
 - God brings trials and suffering to purify our faith and demonstrate its genuineness.
 - Edwards says that “True virtue never appears so lovely as when it is most oppressed; and the divine excellency of real Christianity is never exhibited with such advantage as when under the greatest trials: then it is that true faith appears much more precious than gold” (Jonathan Edwards, 21-22).
- “May be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ”
 - The focus is on the value of genuine faith on the day of judgment when God examines the life of each person (cf. 2 Cor. 5:3; Phil. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:18; 2 Pet. 3:10, 14; Rev. 14:5).
 - If our faith proves genuine, then we will receive “praise, glory and honor” (cf. James 1:2-4, 12).
- The emphasis is on the reward believers receive but these rewards return back to God since he is the one who empowers the believer to persevere (see 1:5).

2. Suffering purifies our faith.

- God uses suffering to wean me off of myself and cast me onto his grace and power.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For

the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Co. 12:7-10 ESV)

- Satan was to use sufferings to destroy your faith (1 Pet. 5:8).
- God uses sufferings to destroy your self-reliance and increase your reliance on his grace.
- “This is God’s universal purpose for all Christian suffering: more contentment in God and less satisfaction in self and the world. I have never heard anyone say, ‘The really deep lessons of life have come through times of ease and comfort.’ But I have heard strong saints say, ‘Every significant advance I have ever made in grasping the depths of God’s love and growing deep with Him has come through suffering’ (John Piper).

We can rejoice in sufferings because we have endured with the presence and power of Christ and our faith has been proven as genuine. It is evident that Christ is real in our lives.

When I started this sermon I posed a question: can I still find joy even in the midst of suffering and trials? The answer is yes...but what do we do when we desire joy but it’s lacking?

How do I fight for inexpressible joy?

1. Be real with God and confess your joylessness.
 - You don’t have to hide it because he already knows it.
2. Cry out to God in prayer.
 - Restore to me the joy of my salvation (Ps. 51:12).
 - Satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love that I may rejoice and be glad (Ps. 90:14).
3. Seek after God in his Word (Ps. 19:7-8).
 - *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;*
 - *The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart*
4. Live in Community (cf. Heb. 3:12-13).

But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith (Phil. 1:24-25 ESV)

- Spend time with people that have a deep sense of joy.

5. Be patient and wait (Ps. 40:1-3).

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a

new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. (Ps. 40:1-3 ESV)