

Women's Bible Study
1 Peter 1:6-7, September 30, 2020

“**May grace** (the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude) **and peace** (prosperity and quietness) **be yours in the fullest measure**” 1 Peter 1:2b.

Because –

o **Even though things are difficult, we can rejoice (v.6)**

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

There is no rejoicing because of difficult circumstances however, God's children can continue to rejoice in and through trials because of their future and the certain hope they have in Christ. Those who are chosen are able to rejoice in the grace and peace of Christ given to them, because of His mercy (v.3), because of their inheritance reserved in heaven (v.4), because they are protected by His power for salvation (v.5).

The foundation for rejoicing through trials has been laid out for us in the previous verses. Notice the adjective attached to rejoice in verse six – **greatly**. This is more than just accepting difficult circumstances; it is moving through them, exceedingly joyful for the future, with absolute knowledge that in the end all is well with our soul. Consider the account of Horatio Spafford. He survived the great Chicago Fire of 1871 in which he lost most of his real estate investment. Then in 1873, he planned to join his wife and four daughters on a transatlantic cruise after he finished some business. He sent them on their way, and later received tragic news that all four of his children had drowned when the ocean liner was in a freak collision with an iron tanker. Later, approaching the scene of the wreckage, he penned the hymn, “*It Is Well with My Soul*, (Wikipedia).

♥ **Is your soul well, filled with joy, because of God's promises?**

Matthew Poole's Commentary explains rejoicing as “an outward expression of the inward gladness of the heart”. Our hope is based upon what we know for the future – we are saved to glory, where at last we will be safe and secure in the presence of God. Therefore, we are able to *greatly rejoice* even through the distress of trials. We are able to rejoice in the truth of our present salvation and rejoice in the hope of our future reward. Jump ahead to the words in 1 Peter 1:9, “**obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls**”.

In comparison to all eternity, our difficult circumstances are **for a little while**. The KJV translates this phrase to the word season. It literally means puny. Our trials may seem lengthy and overwhelming, but this is

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because our context is wrong. We tend to look at things in the sense of time according to what we understand. We also might look to the pleasures we are given on earth as the fulfillment of our joy. In both scenarios, our focus is shortsighted.

♥ **Is it possible we place too much significance on our circumstances here rather than our purpose for God's future kingdom?**

Days, weeks, months, years, and decades are the means by which we measure our existence. Yet, our soul is eternal, lasting forever with Christ. Our calendar, compared with eternity, pales in its significance. As a visual, take a sheet of paper and mark a point with the sharp tip of a pencil. That point is our time on earth. We can use this same exercise in comparing our suffering with that of our Redeemer. Although our difficulties may be heart-wrenching and filled with extreme sorrow, they are nothing compared to Jesus' rejection and crucifixion.

2Corinthians 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

♥ **Are trials necessary?**

Peter was writing to the Christians who were being tested and persecuted because of their faith, something we rarely experience.

Most of us will encounter difficult circumstances. Many are unavoidable such as illness, death, and the effects of poor decisions made by others. There are those who have experienced flooding, fires, tornadoes, and all types of weather-related disasters. Accidents happen every day. Also, each of us is affected at one time or another by the folly of man by gossip, dishonesty, and pride. We may also suffer the results of our own poor decisions.

Even then, God will use the consequences to discipline us and direct us to His purpose and His glory. Certainly, God is able to take any trial away from us yet often He allows difficulties for our good. We may sorrow for the trial itself, but at the same time, we can rejoice in God's care and the hope of our salvation.

Take a moment to think of the difficult times God has allowed in your life. Trials are designed to change our character, to strengthen us and to teach us. No one would invite trials into their life. However, we are to be thankful in all things, including all forms of hardship, (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

♥ How has God used challenges in your life to grow you spiritually?

1Peter 4:12 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;

Not everyone will experience the same trials. We may hear of those who seem to experience difficult circumstances often and we know of those who rarely experience hardship. Regardless of the extent or the number of trials we might face, we are to keep our focus on God's purpose – the refining of our faith. Therefore, our attitude during difficult times should be one of rejoicing in God's plan. This is having a smile on your soul and peace in your heart even while tears may be streaming down your face.

♥ What is the result when we *do not* walk through trials with a heart of trust and thankfulness?

Sometimes, people get stuck in a trial, never moving forward. They relive difficulties and continuously address the hardships of their past, not for God's glory but rather for their sympathy. We may sorrow but we do not succumb. We need to fully accept *all* things in our lives as God's perfect plan. We have no ownership to our lives; we belong to God to be used for His purpose. In fact, when we consider the loss of anything as having belonged to us, our thinking is wrong. Nothing is ours! Our employment, our spouse, our children, parents, friends, homes, possessions, even our health, ability to communicate and think, our senses, food on the table, enjoyment – everything belongs to God and all are blessings given by Him, not because we deserve or are entitled, but because of His love. Blessings are undeserved gifts given freely as God wills, for His glory and honor.

“God's design in afflicting his people is their probation, not their destruction; their advantage, not their ruin: a trial, as the word signifies, is an experiment or search made upon a man, by some affliction, to prove the value and strength of his faith. This trial is made upon faith principally, rather than any other grace, because the trial of this is, in effect, the trial of all that is good in us. Our Christianity depends upon our faith; if this be wanting, there is nothing else that is spiritually good in us. Christ prays for this apostle, that his faith might not fail; if that be supported, all the rest will stand firm; the faith of good people is tried, that they themselves may have the comfort of it, God the glory of it, and others the benefit of it.” *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*

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Read this word picture from *William Burkitt's New Testament Commentary*, "As the coldness of the winter kills the weeds in our grounds, so the cold blasts of affliction ... kill our corruptions in our souls. Perpetual shinings and fair seasons are reserved for heaven: cold blasts and nipping frosts are needful and useful here on earth ..."

Consider the growth of an apple tree. Most varieties need a period of dormancy in a cold winter climate in order to produce blossoms in the spring. Without the extreme cold, frost or even snow, their yield is small. The periods of vast empty plains of snow in our lives are the very times when our roots dig deep in dependence on God for nourishment and strength so that we might shine for His glory.

We will experience grief through various trials. Yet, nothing here on earth will change the joy we have in our future and in knowing Christ. External circumstances may cause sorrow, yet God's faithfulness is a reason to rejoice always. When difficulties present themselves, either we succumb to temptation or we can choose to persevere in truth, proving the sincerity of our faith.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which [the Lord] has promised to those who love Him.

Peter was writing to the Christians who had been scattered throughout the region as outcasts. They were persecuted and had many temptations to renounce their faith. The reminder to keep focused on their eternal home would help them to remain faithful even while their hearts were heavy. Their faith was being tested.

- ♥ **What is your response when it seems difficult to do the right thing?**
- ♥ **Do you succumb to the world or rejoice in the Truth?**
- ♥ **Are you able to look at trials as an opportunity to grow in your faith?**

Consider this. As a parent, I can remember many times when it would have been easier to ignore a potential problem in the way one of my children were acting or thinking. It required less effort to avoid their discipline. There is no happiness in causing those you love to be discouraged. Yet, love has a responsibility. Real love will allow some difficulty in order to teach and mature. Holding on to this same thought, I

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often wonder at the immense love my Savior has for me to allow hard circumstances in my life in order to refine my thinking. The fact that God even cares enough about me to know what I need to be strengthened in my faith is mind-boggling. There is a purpose in His plan to cause His children to be more like Him, to gain understanding and to grow in their trust of His promises. I am caused to kneel before Him and thank Him for His great love.

Trials prove our faith (v.7)

1Peter 1:7 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;

The blessings of being born again, of our hope because of Jesus' death and resurrection, the certainty of our heavenly home, and the protection of God's power to sustain us for salvation, are reasons we can be joyful. Even in the midst of trials and sorrow, nothing is able to touch our glorious future. There is more – trials prove our faith and the proof of our faith is valuable. In fact, the proof of our faith is desirable, something we should want. We do not glory in the difficulty but rejoice in the result.

♥ Is your faith real?

There is a difference between simply acknowledging facts verses trusting in them to be true. The first is intellectual assent, the second is heart embraced. Let us look a bit closer at these two possibilities.

Intellectual assent uses the rational mind to decide if something might work or might be true. It involves fact gathering and a conclusion based upon those facts. There is no heart response or life-changing revelation. Intellectual assent is merely the acknowledgement of information to be true. Only knowing who God is will not save you. Man can think so highly of his intellect and reasoning that it becomes difficult to recognize his need of a Savior.

Fully embracing something with your heart involves knowledge with trust. It means understanding the facts and adopting them as your own. It is humbly accepting that you need something and are unable to provide the answer. It is realizing that however intelligent you may be, it is impossible to fully understand God's ways. We need to minor in self and major in Christ. True faith is placing your complete trust in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, claiming His sacrifice as your key to heaven. The word faith

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<pistis> is explained as the moral conviction and reliance upon Christ for salvation. It is the assurance that what God says is true. Therefore, sincere faith involves a confidence in the truth of God's word. This is only possible through God's grace working in the lives of His children.

The proof of our faith is more precious than gold. The KJV says it is *much* more precious than gold. *Adam Clarke's Commentary* gives us a clearer understanding of the properties of gold. "Gold is defined by chemists to be the most perfect, the most ductile, the most tenacious, and the most unchangeable of all metals... When exposed to the action of the fire it becomes red hot before it melts, but in melting suffers no alteration; but if a strong heat be applied while in fusion, it becomes of a beautiful green colour. The continual action of any furnace, howsoever long applied, has no effect on any of its properties... Gold is so very tenacious that a piece of it drawn into wire, one-tenth of an inch in diameter, will sustain a weight of 500lbs. without breaking".

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have [its] perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

When we seek to glean a small understanding of gold being refined by fire in order to purify it, we can begin to understand the necessity of trials in our lives. In addition, when we understand the reason for trials, our response is led to thankfulness and peace for the work God is performing to strengthen our faith. Revisit the beginning of this section of scripture. **1 Peter 1:2b May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.** God's work in your heart, the reflection of His love in your life, a heart of gratitude in understanding the gift of your salvation, and the quietness in your heart that stems from a secure future no matter the turmoil around you, are the hallmarks of a soul that fully relies upon God. This is the precious proof of your faith.

Your faith will be tested in one form or another.

♥ **Will it be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ?**

Job 23:10 "But He knows the way I take; [When] He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Proverbs 17:3 The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests hearts.

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2Thessalonians 1:11-12 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ♥ **Check the genuineness of your faith. Is it mixed with imposters of pride, selfishness, or worldliness? Is it something kept for 'emergencies'? Is your faith only used as a security blanket?**
- ♥ **What is your reaction to trials? Do you persevere in serving God? Do you complain? Do you think "poor me", desiring others' attention and pity?**
- ♥ **Does your faith sustain your joy in all circumstances?**

Read *Matthew Poole's Commentary* of 1 Peter 1:7, "He compares the faith of the saints with gold, and argues from the less to the greater ... If men do so far esteem their gold, that they will make the excellency and preciousness of it appear by trying it in the fire, which purgeth away the dross, and discovers the goodness of the metal; no wonder if God will have the faith of the saints (more precious to him than gold is to men) tried by afflictions, that the excellency of it may more fully be discovered".

1Peter 1:13 Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober [in spirit,] fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1Peter 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.