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Between Two Worlds

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Who Can Rejoice In A World Like Ours?

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:6-12



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Good morning, Providence. How are you this morning?

Good.

Good? I want to say one more welcome to you. We're glad that you're here. If you're here in the room, if you're joining us online, we're really grateful that you've come, and our plan is to walk through part of 1 Peter this morning. And I have been thinking ever since the first service and I saw that video, I thought, maybe I don't even need to preach this sermon about having joy in the midst of difficulty. We've just seen such a clear example of it, and it does beg the question that Phil asked a couple of times, how can we, or who can rejoice in a world like ours?

Now, our world is a difficult place, there's no question about it. If you've been around any length of time, you've tasted it in one way or another, and as Brian has talked about the last couple of weeks, these people that Peter is writing to in this letter, they were Christians who were facing persecution and difficulty. It was a difficult time for them, and Peter's instruction here is for those who are experiencing various trials, he says, or some translations say "Manifold trials," meaning all kinds, like across a spectrum, every kind of trial that you might face, and that includes everyone in the room. It includes our brothers and sisters in Indonesia who are experiencing a kind of trial that I can't even imagine, and it includes some of you who have received a difficult medical diagnosis, or you've... job loss, or you're experiencing other kinds of trials and suffering.

These instructions that he gives here this morning are for us collectively to think about what does it mean to rejoice in a world like this, a world that is filled with trials and trouble? In fact, Jesus promises his followers in John 16:33, that "In this world, you will have trouble." And that's a sort of teaching that a lot of churches maybe skip over or miss, and can even sell something different, where coming to Jesus is all about peace and comfort, but that's not what he tells us. He says, "In this world, you will have trouble," but he says, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." He said, right before that, at the beginning of verse 33, that he told his followers these things that they might have peace, even though they have trouble.

And that's what we want to think about this morning. I'm hoping that our study of 1 Peter 1:6-12, will equip us this morning, not just to endure suffering, which we will all do, but to rejoice in the midst of it, by enjoying Jesus and enjoying the gospel, the good news about Jesus. In fact, what we're going to do, we're going to make our way through these six verses this morning, six through 12, and we are going to walk through those, think about them together. And really, Peter is going to move us along towards, he's going to introduce this idea of trial to us, and then he's going to move us through these reasons that we have to rejoice. And we're going to end our time with an extended time of prayer, and some extra singing to do exactly what he's going to call us to do, which is to enjoy Christ and enjoy this salvation that we have been given. We're going to do that this morning.

So let me pray, and then we'll into 1 Peter 1 together. Heavenly Father, we ask that you would be with us during this time, that your spirit would guide us and lead us into all truth, or that you would reveal yourself. We believe that 1 Peter, this book, is living and active. We believe it is inspired by you for us. And so, God, speak clearly through it. God, help us to see Christ high and lifted up, that he might draw us to himself. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

Read with me, if you have your Bible, 1 Peter 1, starting in verse six, it says, "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."

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ, and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, and the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

The first thing I want you to see this morning and to write down, if you're taking notes, is that Christians can have joy in suffering. Christians can have joy in suffering. Verse six is sort of this collision of two realities. You have this wonderful world of verses three through five, where we're scaling the heights of God's glorious promises and redemption in the world. It says, "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."

Verses three through five are about these incredible things. God's mercy, the miracle of new birth, living hope through a miraculous resurrection, our inheritance that will never fade. It can't be taken from us. It's kept in heaven by God, and it's ready to be revealed in the last day, and then verse six brings this reality, this reality that we don't live in those realities all the time, but instead we live live in the world.

Verse six says, "In this, you rejoice in these heavenly realities. Though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved various trials." Peter's introducing this idea that we live on the ground, and we live in a real world with real pain and suffering, with real cancer, and real death, and hunger, and divorce, and conflict, and difficulty. And I'm saying that verse six brings these two worlds together, because it's obvious that Peter doesn't think that the grief of this current world should keep us from the joy that these incredible truths should bring us. Verses three through five should produce joy and worship in us, and the realities of verse six

shouldn't diminish that joy. In fact, the joys of verses three through five are so glorious, that Peter has laid them before us expecting that they will provide all that we need to walk in joy through the trials of this life.

Peter is going to point to several realities in these verses that should produce joy for us in the midst of our trials and suffering. Verse seven, for example, reminds us that these trials are not just something to endure, but there's real purpose in them. He says that, "We're encountering these trials if necessary, for a little while, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, that perishes though it's tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, and glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

So he's drawing a comparison between our faith and gold. Gold is purified by fire. You put gold in fire and it doesn't destroy the gold, it just burns off the impurities and leaves a more refined and pure gold. And he's saying that our faith is the same way, that when our faith is put into the fire of trials, our faith isn't destroyed, but the impurities are burned away, leaving a more tested and genuine faith. But our faith, he says is more valuable even than this gold he's comparing it to, because even this gold that's been purified, will one day perish. But he says our faith, on the other hand, will result in praise, and glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our faith purified by trials, will bring glory to Christ.

And maybe that doesn't seem as important to us in this moment, but I want you to think about the day that you will see Christ face to face. You will see Jesus bearing the marks of your redemption, and you will be so glad that your faith, which has been tested by trials, brings him some praise, some glory, some honor. You will be so grateful for every trial that you experienced in this life, because it has produced a more genuine faith that brings him honor.

So how are we supposed to think about our trials? Well, these first two verses tell us a couple of things. One, our trials are temporary. Our trials are temporary. Even trials that might last for decades in this life, are temporary compared to the eternal and fading realities that Peter is pointing us to in the first part of this letter. Think about the comparison of an eternal inheritance, unfading, undefiled, cannot be taken. It's kept in heaven for you, ready to be revealed at the last time, compared to what he says in verse six, "Though now for little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials." Peter is highlighting a contrast that we should keep in mind that our trials are temporary, and these promises of eternal inheritance are forever.

The second thing is that God uses our trials and all things in our lives, for our good and for his glory. God uses our trials and everything else for our good and for his glory. Our trials can be used by God to purify our faith, which will bring him glory in the end, and bring us a richer experience of fellowship with him in the present. I think about Job, when I think about this, faith that's purified by trials. Job was sort of famous for his trials. If you've ever read the Book of Job, it's a pretty daunting story. It's a man who had lots that the world had to offer. He had possessions, he had a great family, he had faith. He's just kind of making his way through life, enjoying all that life has to offer, and then these trials and tests begin to come into his life, and he loses one thing after another. He loses his family, he loses his possessions, he even loses his physical health

to the point that his own wife comes to him and says, “Just curse God, and die.”

Suffering in these profound ways, and he doesn't do that. He doesn't curse God. Instead, he leans into God and he's struggling to understand, he's wrestling for faith, and around Chapter 38, God begins to speak to Job. His friends have been speaking to him, his wife has been speaking to him, and finally God speaks to him. He says, “Sit down, Job. I have some things to tell you.” And he begins to speak to Job, and at the end of the book, Chapter 42, verse five, this is what Job has to say. He said, “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.” His faith was refined by his trials, and it brought an intimacy with God that he had never known before. He had heard of God, but now his eyes had seen God. He knew God in a way that he hadn't before.

God uses our trials and all things for our good and for his glory. The third thing is that we can have joy in the midst of our trials, and that's what these next few verses are going to be about. So the first point of application I want you to write down this morning, is let's remember that our suffering is temporary grief, and God can use it for our good and his glory. Let's remember that our suffering is temporary grief, and that God can use it for our good and for his glory. Verses six and seven bring these two realities crashing together. Verses three through five, these heavenly glories, and then the reality of trials in this life, and now in verse eight, Peter goes on to explain more about the source of this joy in the midst of trials. So where does this joy come from?

The next point is that Christians can have joy and suffering by enjoying Christ. Christians can have joy and suffering by enjoying Christ. Look at verse eight. Verse eight is so interesting to me, and he says, “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.” This is interesting to me, because of who is writing it. Peter stops to reflect on this idea that these people that he is writing to, and the people that are reading this letter, including us, they have never seen Jesus. They don't see him, but they love him. They don't now see him, but they believe in him and rejoice in him.

Peter, of course on the other hand, has seen Jesus. Peter saw Jesus walk on water, saw Jesus calm a storm, saw him feed 5,000 men with a few fish and a few loaves of bread. He saw Jesus' glory in the transfiguration. He saw the empty tomb. He saw Jesus raised from the dead. And yet, he is keenly aware that these people that he is writing to, never saw these things. “You haven't seen him, but you love him. You haven't seen him, but you believe in him.”

When he says, “You believe in him,” what he's meaning is that there's this ongoing resting and trusting in Jesus. He's referring to a personal relationship with Jesus. We're continually trusting in him, worshiping him, loving him, adoring him, and this relationship that we have allows us to rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. It allows for ongoing joy in the midst of good days and hard days. Regardless of your circumstances, your relationship with Jesus is constant, so your joy can be constant. The phrase, “Filled with glory,” points to the glory found in God's presence, again, pointing to a relationship. It's pointing to a regular

enjoyment of Jesus himself.

And when he says in verse nine, “Obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls,” he’s referring to this joy of knowing and resting in Christ. “The salvation of your souls” refers to all the benefits of saving faith from the personal relationship that we experience today, to the eternal hope of inheritance that we have to come. The bottom line is that we can have joy in suffering, because we can enjoy a relationship with Jesus, no matter what is happening in our lives. We can enjoy him. But what does that mean? I found this to be the hardest part of the sermon, trying to think about how do I explain to people, what does it mean to have and enjoy a relationship with someone that you cannot see? I’m trusting that many of you have experienced it, so you don’t need me necessarily to explain it to you, but I’m hoping that some of you maybe who aren’t enjoying a relationship like that, would see this as an invitation to seek it, to go after it, to enjoy a relationship with Christ.

And so, I found some examples of what it might look like. One comes from the Bible of 2 Timothy four. Paul was an apostle traveling around, preaching the gospel. He was frequently arrested, he was always in trouble, and he ends up in Rome in a prison. And 2 Timothy is the last letter that he wrote, he’s writing to Timothy, who was a younger pastor that he had been coaching and training, and he says to him, as he’s sort of pouring out his experience, he says, “At my first defense,” so he’s talking about being in front of the Roman governors, “At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them.” Listen to what he says in verse 17, “But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me, the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear, so I was rescued from the lion’s mouth.” He says, “The Lord stood by me.” He’s talking about a real presence, that the Lord strengthened him.

David used a similar language in 1 Samuel 30, when all of his men turn against him because they had run after their enemy, and then their camp had been attacked, and their wives and children had been carried off, and they all turn on him. Everyone is mad at him. And it says, “When everyone else turned against him, he turned to the Lord and was strengthened.” This real presence of God, enjoying him being strengthened by him.

Another example comes from church history. John Wesley was a master at articulating his relationship with God, and what it was like and what it felt like. And in one of his journal entries, shortly after he was converted to Christianity, he writes this, “After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations.” He was talking about how he was being filled with these doubts that were coming at him about his faith. He says, “But I cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I often lifted up my eyes, and he sent me help from his holy place.”

Another phrase I think about all the time of John Wesley, is when he’s talking about his conversion. He talks about how he was listening to this explanation of the gospel coming from the Book of Romans and he says, “I felt my heart strangely warmed.” Some of you who have a relationship with Jesus, you know what I’m talking

about, but maybe it's been a long time since you've experienced it. We should seek to enjoy this relationship with Christ. I don't know how else to describe it to you, other than to hold it out before you and say, pursue it.

Psalm 34:8 says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Taste and see." One last example, Anne Steele wrote a hymn in the 1700s. She wrote lots of hymns and lots of poetry, but this hymn is called, *Thou Lovely Source of True Delight*. She writes about Jesus. And she was no stranger to suffering. She had lost her mom when she was three years old. She became an invalid because of an injury and sickness at age 19. At age 21, she was engaged to be married, but her fiance passed away before they could be married. Her life filled with suffering, but she learned to find joy in the presence of Jesus.

Listen to what she writes. "Thou lovely source of true delight, whom I unseen adore. Unveil thy beauties to my sight, that I may love thee more. Jesus, my Lord, my life, my light, oh come with blissful ray, break through the shades of night, and chase my fears away." This is the prayer of a woman who is seeking to enjoy Jesus more. She prays to him, "Unveil thy beauties to my sight, that I may love thee more." She wants to see more of Christ, to experience more of his presence. She seeks after it. She's calling for it. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

The second point of application I want you to write down this morning is, let's remember to enjoy our relationship with Jesus. Let's remember to enjoy our relationship with Jesus. And trials often provide the opportunities for us to learn what it means to enjoy this relationship. It's true in my life. Some of the most difficult times have produced the most intimacy with Christ. When I'm the most uncertain about the future, when the decision seems the scariest, or I'm experiencing loss in some way, that is when I draw near to God, and I have found that he is drawing near to me. Seek after him, taste and see that he is good.

Finally, Peter is going give us further insight into our salvation. The last Point this morning is that Christians can have joy in suffering by enjoying their salvation. Christians can have joy in suffering by enjoying their salvation. He says in verse 10, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace, that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully." What is he saying there? He said, "These prophets of old, these prophets of the Old Testament, they prophesied about the grace that was to be yours." So they were prophesying about a hope that was to come. They were prophesying about a coming gospel. This good news that was to come.

This is just another example of the New Testament telling us that the Old Testament is really about Jesus. The whole thing is about him, the whole thing is pointing to him. In fact, Jesus himself says this in Luke 24:27, he's walking along the road to Emmaus with two of his disciples, and he's explaining to them these things that have happened in Jerusalem. And he says, it says in verse 27, "And beginning with Moses," Genesis through Deuteronomy, Moses, "And all the prophets, all the way to the end of the Old Testament, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

So he walked them through the very beginning of the Old Testament, all the way to the end, and he told them how these things were relating to him, how they were pointing to him, how they were predicting his coming, and the prophets saw this, that they were prophesying about the grace that was to come, and they searched and inquired carefully. And it tells us what they were searching for, verse 11, “Inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating, when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.”

They were inquiring about who is this one who is coming? This one who is coming to suffer, and then he’ll be glorified, who is he, and when is he coming? They searched and inquired carefully about what the spirit of Christ was indicating in them. He’s talking about the Holy Spirit there, and refers to him as the Spirit of Christ, or the Spirit of Messiah, because his ministry was so closely related to pointing to Christ, the coming hope. These prophets, they wanted to know about the person or time that their prophecies were about. In other words, they knew they were prophesying about someone to come who had suffered and who would be glorified, but they didn’t know exactly who, and they didn’t know exactly when.

Just a few examples, thinking about how they predicted his suffering all the way back in Genesis 3, Moses reveals a conversation between God and the serpent when he says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, in between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Moses, all the way at the beginning of the story, is revealing that there is one who is coming. He will save us, but he will suffer. His heel will be bruised.

David, a thousand years before Christ, in Psalm 22, predicts the sufferings of Christ. He says, “For dogs encompass me, a company of evildoers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing, they cast lots.” He predicts the sufferings of Christ. Isaiah, 700 years before Christ, in Isaiah 53:5, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds, we are healed.” They predicted that one would come and that he would suffer greatly, but they also predicted that he would be glorified.

Daniel 7:13-14, he says, “I saw in the night visions, and behold with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the ancient of days, and he was presented before him, and to him was given dominion and glory, and the kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed.” Isaiah 9:6, “For to us, a child is born, a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace, there shall be no end. And on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth, and forever more. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

Peter points out just how glorious all of these realities are by saying that we have it better than the prophets, and even the angels. Verse 12 it says, “It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, and the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” This good news is so glorious that the prophets searched and inquired carefully about it, and the angels longed to look into it. What is this good news? What is the news that is so good that these men who were receiving direct revelation from God, there was this one piece of that revelation that they longed to see a little bit more? Who is this one that is coming? When will he come and deliver this hope to us? They longed to see it.

The good news is this, that God saw us in our helpless state. Saw we had rebelled against him, had wandered into sin, and we were hopeless to restore ourselves, and so, he sent his son Jesus to save us. Jesus took on flesh and humbled himself, and became a man. He lived the life that you and I were supposed to live, and then he died the death that you and I deserve to die, so that there could be an exchange by faith, we could believe in him, believe that he was raised from the dead. And it says that, “Our sin is taken from us, removed from us, as far as the east is from the west, and his righteousness is given to us.” The Bible describes it as “Like a cloak that covers us,” so that we could be reconciled to God, reconciled to our creator, the one that we were made to know and worship.

This is the good news. So glorious that the prophets of old longed to see just a little bit more. When is this hope coming? When will this suffering servant be revealed? And the angels long to look into it. These angels who have experienced glories that we can't imagine, the thing that they longed to see is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. “Show us that glory,” they say. When was the last time that your heart was stirred by the good news of Jesus Christ? He is the promised hope of prophets for centuries. He is the great high priest and mediator between God and man. He is our rescuer, our sustainer, and our friend. Have you gotten too familiar with these truths?

Peter is offering the gospel, this salvation that he is talking about, he's putting it before us as so profound that it would be able to produce joy in us, in the midst of all kinds of trials. This gospel is such good news, it's so glorious that it could produce joy in us when we are at a funeral with four of our church members laying before us, that we would still have hope. He's setting it before us and saying, it's so glorious that regardless of what circumstances you might face, what manifold trials, what various trials you might experience, you can rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Are you enjoying your relationship with Christ to the point that the trials of this life seem like light and momentary afflictions? If not, why? Maybe you have enjoyed your relationship with Christ in the past, maybe you have marveled at this salvation in the past, but you've gotten distracted by other things. Other priorities have pushed out the priority of enjoying him, and now you find your joy drying up. This is a great day to commit yourself to enjoying him, to commit yourself to devoting the time that's necessary to spend in his presence, to seek him, to taste and see that he is good.

We have a Bible reading plan, it's in a black book out in the lobby. It starts May 1st, the next section. It's a simple one chapter a day guide that will walk you through thinking about the Bible, writing down a prayer. That one simple thing could be what you need to do to begin enjoying a relationship with Jesus again. Commit yourself to being in the word. Maybe you aren't enjoying him because you don't know him. You are visiting with us, you're a guest, or maybe you've been attending for a long time, and you've heard this good news now, at least once, maybe many times, but you haven't yet put your faith in Jesus. Again, I plead with you today, put your hope in Jesus Christ. Turn from every other hope, turn from every other false hope, any idea that you might be able to save yourself or do enough good to earn the favor of God, you can't.

But Jesus says, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Love him, believe in him, trust in him, and enjoy the salvation that comes through him. The last point of application you can write down this morning is, let's remember to enjoy our salvation each day. Let's remember to enjoy our salvation each day, and that's exactly what we're going to do now. Like I mentioned at the beginning, we're going to spend a little extra time praying, enjoying Christ, and then singing some extra songs this morning to enjoy him and worship him. So let me pray for you, and then we'll enjoy Christ together.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word that points us to these glorious realities, these incredible truths. Lord, forgive us that we can so quickly move past these things, we can so quickly be distracted by so many different other things. God, help us to enjoy Christ. Help us to enjoy being in your presence, help to enjoy these promises that you have for us. God, give us faith, I pray to believe. And help us now, as we seek to pursue you and to spend time in your presence. God, would you help us? I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



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