



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study

JOYFULLY ENDURING PERSECUTION AND SUFFERING I Peter 1:6-9

The text introduces the paradox of the christian life - "**as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.**" (2 Corinthians 6:10). These christians were passing through a period of "**heaviness through manifold temptations**" yet they "**greatly rejoiced**" in the Lord. They knew that "**the trial of their faith, though it be tried with fire**" will eventually result in "**praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.**" Though they had not seen Christ physically, yet they loved Him so much that they were willing to suffer for His sake. They had not seen His gracious and glorious face as Peter had, but they loved Him as much as Peter did. They had received His salvation and had known Him by the inner knowledge of spiritual communion and learned to love Him even above all people they could see. They received and enjoyed the blessing promised to those who had not seen but yet had believed.

Salvation is a present reality. "By grace are ye saved through faith". Redeemed by Christ and reconciled with God, we rejoice in Him. Persecution and suffering may be ours because of our christian character and conviction in Christ. We are not in heaven yet, but we have joy in the Lord which is a foretaste of the joy of heaven. Even now, true christians behold the glory of the Lord, as in a glass, and beholding, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

REJOICING WHILE ENDURING MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS

I Peter 1:6; 4:13; John 16:33; Acts 5:40-42; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Matthew 5:10-12; John 16:20-22; Romans 12:12; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 10:32-34.

Is it possible that joy should live side by side in the same heart with sorrow? That was the experience of the christians to whom Peter wrote. Persecution and suffering are indispensable part of the christian life, yet there is abiding peace within the heart while there may be persecution from without. The depths of the sea are still, while winds rave and waves and currents roar on the surface. Sorrow and joy at the same time, in the same heart. It is possible always to rejoice - "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing".

"**Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution**" (2 Timothy 3:12). None of us is exempted from persecution and suffering. Whenever they come, there is a "**need be**" for them, and they are only "**for a season**". When these events come into our lives, our great love for Christ and our assurance of future reward and glory should add gladness to our sadness. The heart that is united to Christ will have an inward solemn peace and joy which no temptest of sorrow can extinguish.

It helps christians to discern the meaning and know the reason for our afflictions; they are only for a moment, for a season and they are necessary (2 Corinthians 4:17). Our loving, heavenly Father knows about them and He moderates and controls them. He permits them "**for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness**" (Hebrews 12:10). We endure and even rejoice in them because we know that they are not for our destruction but for our development. The rigours which the athlete has to undergo are not meant to make him collapse but to enable him develop more strength and staying-power. In this world, trials are not meant to take the strength out of us, but to put more strength into us. Whatever we have to go through on this side of heaven, there is enough grace to match every trial.

REFINING THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY TRIALS

I Peter 1:7; Malachi 3:3; Proverb 17:3; Zechariah 13:9; Job 23:10; Isaiah 48:10; Psalm 66:10-12; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12; Jude 24.

Trials of faith and manifold temptations will come and may bring heaviness and sorrow but they are meant to refine, purge and purify us. As fire tests and purifies gold, so trials test and purify the character and faith of christians. God tried and tested Abraham, Job and many others. Their trials made them stronger in their faith

and trust in God. Our trials come to make us stronger in the Lord. In refining gold, the heart is turned on until the gold is melted and the refiner can see his reflection in the melted gold. God presides over our trials and afflictions. He regulates the heart, removes the dross and impurities and waits to see Himself, the image of His Son reflected in our lives. **"And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier ... and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness"** (Malachi 3:3).

Trials are part of the necessary training and discipline of sonship. Are the trials painful, do they burn? They are to the soul what fire is to the body, searching and consuming. Sometimes the trials seem unbearable and they cause heaviness. Blessed heaviness. It ends in **"joy unspeakable and full of glory."** Our trials and temptations (if endured patiently and borne meekly) refine and purify our character from self-confidence and taints of the world. They make us humble, distrustful of ourselves, trusting only in God. Allowed to do their perfecting work in us, we shall **"be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."**

REWARD, JOY AND GLORY AFTER EARTHLY TROUBLES

1 Peter 1:8,9; 5:10; John 20:29; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:1,27; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15; Romans 15:13; 6:22.

Thousands, indeed millions, there are in every age who have had a passionate, loose affection-and-attachment to Christ since He died for us on the Cross. Time and distance seem powerless to diminish our love for Him. Such love rules and guides the heart, stimulates and produces patience, brings peace, hope and holiness, conquers the soul and makes it conquer sin, the flesh and the world. Though unseen, yet we love Him because He died for each of us and lives to keep us holy in fellowship with the Father. From His throne, He asks each of us, **"lovest thou Me"**? Though our eyes have not seen Him, our hearts need not falter in the answer, **"Thou knowest that I love Thee."**

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Faith brings the Lord very near to the soul. Faith opens the door to Him and then He enters to make His abode within the heart that receives Him by faith. "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). In His love, there are times God grants us "joy unspeakable", that is, an experience of joy beyond all power of expression. It will be as if the joy of a lifetime were concentrated into a moment. The time is fast approaching when the joy will be "fall of glory" - the joy of a glorified spirit in a glorified body in the presence of the glory of the glorified Redeemer. What a day that will be!

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