

1 Peter 1:6-9

Christians in the First Century were profiled as treasonous, atheists, strange, anti-business, anti-social, anti-politically correct, unpatriotic, cannibalistic, immorally deviant, anti-family.

Tacitus writes in the first century, “*These who had been given the vulgar name of Christians, were detested for the abominations they perpetrated; the founder of the sect, Christ by name, had been executed by Pontius Pilate; and this dangerous superstition, though put down for the moment, broke out again, not only in Judaea, the original home of this pest, but even in Rome.*” [Tacitus - Roman Senator]

“*Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*” (1 Timothy 3:7).

In First Peter Chapter 1 Christians are:

- Marked by graciousness – v. 2
- Known for a spirit of internal peace – v. 2
- Always grateful for what we have – v. 3
- People who pray to our Founder and Leader as He is alive and risen from the dead –v. 3
- Have certainty about the future – v. 3
- Anticipate an incredible inheritance that dwarfs anything the world can offer – v. 4
- People who talk often of another world that’s coming soon – v. 5

I. Christians are people who rejoice in the midst of difficulty – Verse 6

The opening phrase in verse 6, “*in this*” ties back to the previous description of our “*living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ Lord from the dead*” from verse 3. The term (rejoice or rejoicing “*joy*”) is never found in secular Greek. The secular Greek talked about “happiness.”

Happiness depends upon what happens to us. Happiness is externally generated, where joy is internally generated.

Selah – Joy is a glad and settled contentment; it is the fruit of a divine relationship that produces a divine perspective on what happens in life, by means of our submission to the Holy Spirit.

Four (4) Realities of Trials:

A. Trials are not eternal – Vs. 6 “*even though now, for a little while...*”

Earlier in this text, Peter told us that our inheritance is eternal, but now he makes sure we understand that our trials won’t be eternal. Trials might last a long time, but they won’t last forever. They are temporary and eventually replaced with “*an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.*” (2 Corinthians 4:17) Suffering and pain one day will give way to unhindered, indescribable praise.

This kind of perspective is ultimately described as the example of our Lord, “*who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.*” (Hebrews 12:2) He willingly experienced pain, suffering, and separation like we cannot imagine.

B. Trials are never wasteful

This can be amplified to read, “*even though now for a little while, if necessary . . . and it is!*” God uses trials for a variety of reasons.

1. Trials are never wasted because they remind believers of our dependency on Christ

Paul writes, “*I was given a thorn in the flesh to keep from exalting myself. . . most gladly therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

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2. Trials are never wasted because they reduce the attraction of worldly things (1 Peter 2: 11; 4:13-19)

In chapter 4 the Apostle Peter will instruct that suffering cause us to “*cease from sin.*” He frames it in the context that the end of all things is near so, keep this in mind as we suffer and face trials.

3. Trials are never wasted because they enable us to comfort others who suffer (vs. 22-25)

Peter encourages his readers to love and support one another as they face the various trials and tribulations from persecution. Paul writes that God “... *comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

4. Trials are never wasted because they develop deeper and wiser character in the believer (1 Peter 2:12; 4:14, 16)

The Apostle James would add that trials develop endurance and endurance leads to greater maturity (*James 1:2*). God knows how to raise His children, he is not a “helicopter God.” He doesn’t swoop in to rescue us from pain. God knows that it requires hard work and hard knocks and tough times in order to produce maturity, endurance and wisdom.

C. Trials are always painful

The Greek word Peter uses here for “*various*” is literally translated “*multicolored.*” He identifies that trials come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

The Greek word used here translated as “*grieved*” or “*distressed*” means not only physical pain, but also mental, emotional pain, and anguish. The word can include disappointment, heartache, sorrow, anxious worry, and fearful thoughts.

Later in this letter, Peter will remind the believer that for every color of trial we might face, God has a color of grace to match it (chp. 4:12-13).

D. Trials reveal and refine genuine faith – Vs. 7

Peter is giving his readers a futuristic viewpoint. There is coming a day when Jesus Christ will be revealed, in the interim, using the metaphor of a goldsmith. God can pour out our life and our testimony of faith and make of us articles of exquisite value that ultimately reflect His face; the character of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

II. We are people who love and follow an invisible Deity (Vs. 8)

Verses 8-9 expanded in the Greek would read, “*You obtain as the outcome of your faith, the kind of faith that loves an invisible Lord, the kind of faith that believes in a God that leads you through unexplainable things, the kind of faith that gives evidence of the salvation of your souls – not only now, but forever.*”

The Apostle Peter’s point ... you love Him and believe in Him, yet you’ve never seen Him. But what you do see all around you are trials and difficulties, pain and suffering. Yet in spite of all of it you still want to follow Him--that proves you really believe and trust in Him.

Application:

Since joy cannot be “naturally” produced, what then is the key to producing joy? What would be some indications that a believer is indeed joyful?

Our perspective on suffering and trials needs to change. By God’s grace this week, work at considering each difficulty that presents itself as a stepping stone to spiritual maturity. Keep a journal on this.