

September 2, 2007 by Steve Brandon



Rejoice Always

1 Peter 1:3-7

1. Rejoice in Your Salvation (verses 3-5).

2. Rejoice in Your Suffering (verses 6-7).

John Newton, former slave trader and pastor in England during the 1700's once wrote,

Suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate, and his [carriage] should break down a mile before he got to the city, which obliged him to walk the rest of the way; what a fool we should think him, if we saw him ringing his hands, and blubbering out all the remaining mile, "My [carriage] is broken! My [carriage] is broken!" [\[1\]](#)

We understand clearly why such a man would be thought to be foolish. To cry about a broken carriage when you are within a day of inheriting a large estate worth hundreds of times more than the chariot appears to us to be absolutely ridiculous. But, oh, how often our lives demonstrate the same foolishness! For those of us who are in Christ we have an inheritance awaiting us in heaven which is far greater and far more valuable and far more lovely than any estate the richest among us will ever inherit. Yet we can easily grumble and complain and "blubber" at the trials and difficulties we face in this life on our way to our inheritance.

When this man's carriage broke down what should he have done? He should have gladly left it alongside the road and began walking to New York City, taking care of it later. We could even envision this man whistling a nice little tune on his journey. We could envision him singing,

Hi Ho, Hi Ho, to New York I go.
I have a big inheritance, Hi Ho, Hi Ho.
Hi Ho, Hi Ho, I'm walking rather slow.
I'll gladly walk, it is my lot, Hi Ho, Hi Ho.

We wouldn't consider this action to be at all foolish. None of us would say, "Hey, buddy, you can't just leave your carriage by the side of the road like that can you? Aren't you worried about your chariot?" We wouldn't consider this action to be in any way presumptuous. We would see that he understands the big picture. He understands that the inheritance is awaiting him. This is because in the grand scheme of things, the chariot doesn't matter much. He has an inheritance waiting for him! It is fully reasonable that he happily heads to the street to walk.

This little illustration is the message of our text. Perhaps as you read it you can compare its contents to the illustration above by John Newton.

1 Peter 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so 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 flow of this text is just like the man on the way to New York to collect his inheritance. In verses 3-5, Peter is describing the inheritance that awaits us in heaven. (In fact, in verse 4, he even uses the words, "to obtain an inheritance.") Then, in verses 6-7, we see the broken chariot--the temporary trials that come upon us in this life. In this sense our text this morning is a microcosm of the entire book of 1 Peter. As I trust you will recall, the theme of 1 Peter is "Suffer Now, Glory Later." In our text we see the suffering (in verses 6-7). We also see the glory (in verses 3-5). The suffering is "now for a little while" (verse 6). The glory will "be revealed in the last time" (verse 5).

Now the unique aspect of these verses is that Peter gives us clear directions regarding our attitudes toward these things. We should approach them with a perspective of worship, joy, and happiness. Verse 3 begins, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." These are words of joyful worship. These are words that give "praise and glory and honor" to the Lord. Verse 6 begins, "In this you greatly rejoice." These are words of happiness. These are words that express the delight of our souls! My outline this morning is simple: (1) Rejoice in Your Salvation (verses 3-5); and (2) Rejoice in Your Suffering (verses 6-7).

Let's look at my first point this morning:

1. Rejoice in Your Salvation (verses 3-5).

In presenting verses 3-5 I have only one aim. I want you to grasp the amazing salvation to which we have been called. As grasp it, it is also my aim to drive you to be a worshiper. In other words when I'm done with this point I want you to feel the uncontrollable need to worship God. It is my aim for you to spontaneously say to yourself, "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ! He has granted to me an amazing salvation. I can't wait until I can fully enjoy it! I am looking forward to it. My broken carriage isn't going to get me down."

In order to accomplish my aim I have a few sub-points for you:

a. Your salvation is God-given (verse 3a)

Your salvation is big! The gifts of God are big! God has given your salvation to you. This is a mighty present (as we shall soon see). My oldest daughter turned thirteen years old yesterday. As we gave her a gift, my second daughter wanted to give a gift to her as well. She wrapped up a small pen, which she thought would be nice for her to use in her purse. To be sure, this was a gift from the heart, but it was a small gift. God's gifts are not like this. God's gifts are big.

You haven't earned this salvation in any way. In fact if you earned anything you earned your death. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). However the good news is how that verse ends, "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." If you are a child of God today only because of His great mercy toward you to give you this gift of eternal life. You didn't do anything to cause God to give you salvation. God in his mercy simply gave it to you. We see this here in verse 3, "who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again."

Notice how Peter describes this mercy of God. It is "great." This means that it is large and vast. When you realize what God has done for your soul in saving you, you can come to appreciate Peter's insight into the mercy of God. We are all wretched sinners. If you have done some deep work into discovering the moral compass of your own soul you will know how wicked your heart really is. If you are honest with yourself you know of the many crimes and sins that you have desired in your heart. You have secret sins that nobody knows about, except God. God knows it all. Still He has chosen to save you. It can only be that He has saved you by "His great mercy." Look at what he has done. "He ... has caused us to be born again."

Are you "born again"? This phrase sometimes has a bad rap in the world. People sometimes sneer, "You aren't one of those 'born again' Christians, are you?" It may have a bad rap because they don't understand the term. Another possibility is that they may have had a bad experience with someone who claimed to be "born again." You may despise everything that others think of when they use the term "born again" as if it is a bad caricature of a Christian. However don't throw away the phrase, "born again." It's an important phrase in the Scriptures.

This phrase goes back to a conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus who came to Jesus one night. Jesus told him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). By this Jesus simply means that all of us need to experience a radical change in our lives at one point or another if we will ever enter the kingdom of God. This change is so radical it is as if we started our lives all over again. If you haven't been "born again" you cannot see the kingdom of God. It's as simple as that.

Are you "born again"? This phrase, "Born again" may also be translated "Born from above." This gets at the idea of what Jesus was talking about. God needs to act in your life. You need to experience the Spirit of God coming upon your soul and transforming you into being something different than you ever were before. Jesus said, "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8).

Jesus is not only saying that the new birth is necessary. He is also saying that the new birth is entirely an act of God. You can't tell the wind where to blow. It will blow wherever it wants to blow. So also with God you cannot direct the Spirit of God to come upon your life and make you new. It is only going to be the will of God that you are "born again." God is the one who changes you. God is the one who makes you a new creation. God is the one who regenerates you. That is why Peter says that your new life is "God-given." This is reason to say "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the one that gave me my salvation. He is the one that gave you your salvation. He has given to us our ultimate gift.

b. Your salvation brings hope (verse 3b)

Look at the next phrase there in verse 3. God has "[caused us to be born again] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The resurrection of Christ is at the core of our beliefs. We believe that Jesus Christ was God who came in the flesh. We believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). We believe "that he was buried" (1 Cor. 15:4). In addition we believe "that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4).

Peter says that it is *through* this resurrection that we have our living hope. As Christ was raised from the dead so we too may have hope of being raised from the dead as well. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, we read that "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

Consequently if you are in Christ, indicating God has worked on you to change you, you have the hope of being raised from the dead. Your hope is beyond this life. Your hope is in the life to come! Referring back to our illustration you have a

hope of an amazing inheritance where you will really live. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have a hope of better things to come.

Randy Alcorn has given a good illustration of what it means to really live. He wrote the following:

When I anticipate my first glimpse of Heaven, I remember the first time I went snorkeling. I saw countless fish of every shape, size, and color. And just when I thought I'd seen the most beautiful fish, along came another even more striking. Etched in my memory is a certain sound --- the sound of a gasp going through my rubber snorkel as my eyes were opened to that breathtaking under-water world.

I imagine our first glimpse of Heaven will cause us to similarly gasp in amazement and delight. That first gasp will likely be followed by many more as we continually encounter new sights in that endlessly wonderful place. And that will be just the beginning, because we will not see our real eternal home --- the New Earth --- until after the resurrection of the dead. And it will be far better than anything we've seen.

So look out a window. Take a walk. Talk with your friend. Use your God-given skills to paint or draw or build a shed or write a book. But imagine it --- all of it --- in its original condition. The happy dog with the wagging tail, not the snarling beast, beaten and starved. The flowers unwilted, the grass undying, the blue sky without pollution. People smiling and joyful, not angry, depressed, and empty. If you're not in a particularly beautiful place, close your eyes and envision the most beautiful place you've ever been --- complete with palm trees, raging rivers, jagged mountains waterfalls, or snow drifts.

Think of friends or family members who loved Jesus and are with him now. Picture them with you, walking together in this place. All of you have powerful bodies, stronger than those of an Olympic decathlete. You are laughing, talking, playing, and reminiscing. You reach up to a tree to pick an apple or orange. You take a bite. It's so sweet that it's startling. You've never tasted anything so good. How you see someone coming toward you. It's Jesus with a big smile on his face. You fall to your knees in worship. He pulls you up and embraces you.

At last, you're with the person you were made for, in the place you were made to be. Everywhere you go there will be new people and places to enjoy, new things to discover. What's that you smell? A feast. A party's ahead. And you're invited. There's exploration and work to be done --- and you can't wait to get started. [\[2\]](#)

This is the hope of real life awaiting us in heaven as we obtain our inheritance that Peter describes in verse four, which is our next point.

c. Your inheritance is perfect (verse 4)

Peter writes, "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away." In verse four we have three descriptions of our inheritance which we have to look forward to in heaven. All three of them are in the negative: imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. On several occasions, this is how Scripture defines heaven: with negatives. In Revelation 21 we read of how in heaven, "there will *no longer* be any death; there will *no longer* be any mourning, or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4). Regarding the heavenly Jerusalem, "*nothing* unclean, and *no one* who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it" (Rev. 21:27). Regarding the throne the creatures around the throne "*do not cease* to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come'" (Rev. 4:8). Regarding the number of people in heaven there will be "a great multitude which *no one* could count" (Rev. 7:9). The reason why negatives are used in these instances is because there is simply no way to describe our inheritance in heaven by using positive terms.

Peter says that this inheritance that we can expect to experience in heaven is ...

(1) *Imperishable*. That is, it never breaks. Rust never gets to it. The moth never eats it (see Matt. 6:19-20). I remember as a little boy having these combs that said "unbreakable" molded onto them (I believe they are still around). Well, as a little boy, I took it as a challenge to prove the makers of this comb that they were wrong. I remember on several occasions taking these combs and bending them one way, and then bending them the other way, and bending them back again. After a long time of working it back and forth and back and forth I remember being able to finally tear one of these suckers apart. It took a long time but I was able to do it. Such is not the case with heaven. Everything in heaven is "unbreakable." A little child isn't going to be able to destroy anything in heaven by working it back and forth and back and forth. Our inheritance will not break. Our inheritance is also, ...

(2) *Undefiled*. This is getting at the purity of heaven. There is no impurity in heaven. Everybody there has been sanctified once and for all by the blood of Christ. Outside of heaven are "the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying" (Rev. 22:15). However inside heaven are those "who have washed their robes" in the blood of the lamb. In heaven we will not sin. In heaven we won't experience any of the deeds of the flesh "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these" (Gal. 5:19-21). We won't experience conflicts with one another. It will be safe to walk anywhere in the city. There will be no crime-laden areas. All will be harmonious. All will be at peace. On top of that everything will be clean. There will be no need for a vacuum cleaner or a mop any longer.

You will not need a dust rag or carpet cleaner. The streets will be of gold and will never get dirty (Rev. 21:21). There will be no need for street cleaners. The gates will be of pearls and will never need cleaning (Rev. 21:21). The wall to the city will be of beautiful jewels and precious stones (21:15-21) that will shine brilliantly forever. Thirdly, Peter describes our inheritance as ...

3. *Unfading.* We have this couch in our house that used to sit in the sun. As a result the color of the couch has faded away. When you pull out some of the cushions you see what the color of the couch used to be. This is true of many things here upon the earth. Through the years the paint on your house fades. Your blue-jeans fade. The blacktop parking lot becomes a grey-top. Your vitality fades in your later years. However this is not the case in heaven. After 1,000 years everything in heaven will be as bright and brilliant and beautiful as it was the day it was created. You will enjoy its beauties forever as well

When you put together all of these descriptions it is easy to conclude that your inheritance is perfect. There is nothing wrong in any way with the inheritance that awaits you in heaven. It is more than you could ever hope for. It is glorious.

d. Your inheritance is Guaranteed (verses 4b-5).

At the end of verse 4 we read that our inheritance is "reserved in heaven for you." We reserve many things in this life. We reserve tables at the restaurant. We reserve seats at the theatre and on the airplane. We reserve cabins at the resort. We reserve cars at the airport. We reserve shelters in the park. We reserve rooms at the hotel.

If you are trusting in Jesus Christ He has reserved your room for you in heaven. It is waiting for your arrival. It's clean. It's prepared. It's just waiting for you to come. When you arrive in heaven God will check the Lamb's book of life. If your name is there you will be escorted to your room which is more lovely than any room that you have ever stayed in before. In fact it's a perfect room. In this life there are times in which you need to break your reservation.

If you have tickets to the ball game but your child comes down with some sickness you stay home and forfeit your tickets. If you have room reservations but your car breaks down, you call and cancel your reservations. However you will never have to worry about breaking your heavenly reservation. Look at verse 5, "who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." God is more than an attendant in the hotel lobby, just waiting for you to arrive, so that He can show you to your heavenly room. On the contrary God is your secret service agent protecting you for your ultimate salvation in the future. This is what verse 5 is saying. You "are protected by the power of God."

God has His arms around you bringing you ultimately to your inheritance. He has you in the grip of His hand never to let go. "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). God will bring you to your ultimate salvation (verse 5). Is God powerful enough to do this? Of course He is. Nothing will come upon you that is outside of the control of our sovereign God. The Secret Service can fail. There can be security breaches. However God will never fail in bringing His children to their day of final salvation. "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." (1 Peter 5:10). People may make guarantees in this life but there is nothing like the guarantee that comes in verse 5. God will bring you to your day of final salvation.

Before we leave this verse I want you to notice your involvement in these things. It's not as if we do as we please, and God still protects us in these ways. On the contrary we must believe. We are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (verse 5). God protects us through our trust in the magnitude of our inheritance.

To review: (1) We believe that our salvation is God-Given (verse 3a). We are recipients of His blessing. We are not wage earners who merited our heavenly inheritance. (2) We believe in the hope that the resurrection of Christ brings to us (verse 3b). We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. We believe that He is coming again to claim us as His children. We have a hope that is alive with vitality. (3) We believe that our inheritance is perfect (verse 4a). Our faith isn't in some second-rate heaven. We believe that God, "who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, ... will ... freely give us all things!" (Rom. 8:32). (4) We believe that our inheritance is guaranteed (verses 4b-5). We feel the protecting power of God in our lives. We see how He leads us and guides us bringing us to that final day.

So, Rejoice in Your Salvation (verses 3-5). Second, ...

2. Rejoice in Your Suffering (verses 6-7).

This comes in verses 6-7. This is really the punch of my message this morning. See, it's one thing to rejoice when things are going well for you. Yet it's another thing entirely to rejoice when things aren't going well. When your team is winning it's easy to cheer. When the stock market is up it's easy to be happy. When new customers are pouring in at your business it's easy to rejoice. However when your team is losing it's a bit difficult. How many Michigan fans today are rejoicing? [31](#) When the stock market is declining and people are losing lots of money how happy are the clients of financial advisors? When business is bad and hours are being cut how many at work are thrilled about their work?

However as Christians we are called to be different. We are called to rejoice at all times. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, "Rejoice Always." This means "In good times and in bad times." The glories of our future inheritance ought to give us enough reason to rejoice through our trials. We see this in verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been

distressed by various trials.”

My second point is an exhortation to rejoice in your sufferings. But, please notice that this isn't a command in the text. Rather, it's an observation that Peter made. Through all of these “various trials,” These scattered Christians were “rejoicing.” In the Bible, there are other examples of people rejoicing in their trials as well.

At the end of Habakkuk's prophecy, we hear his perspective. He had received word from the Lord that the Chaldeans were soon to come and destroy Jerusalem. It would be similar to God telling us that the North Koreans were going to launch a nuclear attack upon the United States by detonating a dozen bombs upon us in the near future. All we could do is stand by and wait until these bombs would be launched, which would cause incredible suffering among our people. And yet, through it all, Habakkuk found reason to rejoice, “I will rejoice in the God of my salvation” (verse 18). It's really incredible. Here are his words, ...

Habakkuk 3:16-19

I heard and my inward parts trembled,
At the sound my lips quivered.
Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble
Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,
For the people to arise who invade us.
17 Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
Thought the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
18 Yet I will exult in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
19 The Lord GOD is my strength,
And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
And makes me walk on my high places.

Likewise, Paul also rejoiced in his sufferings. In 2 Corinthians 6:10, he wrote of how he was “as sorrowful yet always rejoicing.” This is what God calls all of us to do. We are called to rejoice in our sufferings.

Now it's not that we are called to rejoice because we so much enjoy our sufferings. Nor is Peter telling them to rejoice because of what our sufferings do for us. Rather the message that Peter gives to us here in the first chapter is that the things that await us are so awesome that we cannot help but to rejoice in all of our circumstances including in our suffering. The picture is easy to understand.

Perhaps you remember the story of when Jacob met Rachel. It was love at first sight (Gen. 29:18, 20). Jacob had come to serve Rachel's father, Laban. When Laban asked Jacob, “Tell me, what shall your wages be?” (Gen. 29:15), Jacob replied, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel” (Gen. 29:18). We read in Genesis 29:20, “So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.” This is what our text is talking about. Jacob's affection for Rachel was so great that seven years of labor seemed but a few days. Jacob's work wasn't easy work. It was hard hot labor out with the dirty sheep. Yet his future hope carried him on so that his present toil seemed easy as he looked forward to the day when he would take Rachel's hand in marriage.

For anyone getting married this ought to be the case. When the marriage date is set, those getting married will eagerly look forward to that day with great anticipation. Though the path between now and the wedding may be filled with work and labor and toil, it is always met with rejoicing in the coming happiness.

Every Christian ought to have two days on his calendar. “This day and That day.” Live today for the glory of God. Eagerly anticipate that day when you will see Him just as He is (1 John 3:2). With a proper perspective of the wonders of your salvation there ought to be nothing in this present life that would give you reason not to rejoice.

Paul gave a similar statement in Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” The glory that awaits us is amazing! When you place “the sufferings of this present time” on one side of the scale, with “the glory that is to be revealed to us” on the other side of the scale, there is no comparison. The future glory far outweighs the present sufferings! There is no comparison.

I believe that this is what Jesus was communicating in Matthew 13 when He said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and **from joy** over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matt. 13:44-46).

When you find the treasure it's worth all that you have to get the treasure. When you find the pearl of great value you are willing to sell everything to get it! So if you put the treasure you found on one side of the scale and all of your possessions on the other side of the scale there is no comparison. The treasure is far more valuable to you. You will gladly give up everything to get that treasure!

When Peter said to Jesus, “We have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” (Matt. 19:27), Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms

for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life."

The message here is the same. The future glory is so great that the trials of this life ought to seem as hardly anything at all. It is possible to rejoice even in the most distressing of circumstances. When Peter and the apostles were "flogged" and "ordered ... not to speak in the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:40). Luke tells us in Acts 5:41, "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing** that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

Consider the example set by those early Jewish Christians. Hebrews 10:34, "You showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted **joyfully** the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." We don't know why it is that these people lost their property. It seems as if the government was coming down upon them for some reason, perhaps because they refused to worship the false gods, yet they maintained their faith in the one true God. In so doing they were joyful when others came and took away their property. It's not because they didn't really need their houses. It's not because their houses were small. It's because their affections were elsewhere. Their joy came because of their assurance that they would someday have a "better possession." They knew that their inheritance in heaven would be "a lasting one." So they gladly gave up their own property.

Should you continue reading through Hebrews 11 you will find the same story several times. Of Abraham, we read, ...

Hebrews 11:8-10

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Abraham followed the ways of God, even when the way was difficult. In leaving his homeland Abraham suffered greatly. It would have been far easier for him to have stayed at home. Yet it was his look to the future inheritance that he would receive from God that caused him to press on. The writer to the Hebrews commented later that Abraham was looking for a, "better country, that is a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:16).

Now consider the testimony of Moses.

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Moses gladly took upon himself the reproach of Christ because he was looking to the reward that was to come. Moses had a heavenly gaze, one that looked beyond the difficulties of this life.

In Hebrews 12:2, we see this modeled by Jesus Himself, "who for the **joy** set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus had this gaze beyond the present life to the life to come. With such a perspective Jesus willingly endured the cross.

If you look again at verse 6 you see that the "various trials" that come upon us are only "for a little while." In comparison with eternity everything is "a little while." What's a few years of suffering? In the grand scheme of things it is nothing.

Many of you are familiar with the story of Joni Eareckson Tada. In 1967 she had a diving accident that left her a quadriplegic for the rest of her life. The suffering that she experienced in this life has been incredible. The pain and frustration involved in the life of a quadriplegic is great. Yet she has actually come to rejoice in her sufferings. Thirty-five years after her accident she wrote a book entitled *The God I Love*. In that book she reveals the great suffering that she has experienced as a result of being unable to move her body. Yet she also revealed her perspective of these sufferings. "Oh, thank you, thank you for this wheelchair! I prayed. By tasting hell in this life, I've been driven to think seriously about what faces me in the next. This paralysis is my greatest mercy." ^[4]As her mother's health deteriorated Joni was able to say, ... "Mom, our suffering has taught us something, taught you something: our afflictions have shown us *something cosmic is at stake*. And just five minutes of heaven, I promise you, will make up for everything. It will atone for it all." ^[5] She's got the message of 1 Peter! "Suffer Now, Glory Later." Thus in our sufferings now we ought to rejoice because the glory coming later is so much better than anything that we suffer in this day and age.

I love the way that Joni says, "Something cosmic is at stake." That's what Peter says in verses 6-7. In our sufferings, "something cosmic is at stake." First of all God is looking down upon us and determining what is needed for His greatest glory and "if necessary," He will afflict us with trials. However, these distressing trials will come with a purpose (verse 7), "So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even through tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The purpose in our suffering is ultimately for the glory of God.

As we face these trials they demonstrate the proof of our faith. As our faith continues steadfast, without wavering, through the trials God is ultimately glorified. That's the point at the end of verse 7. "Your faith ... may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

In many ways this is the lesson of the book of Job. When Satan came into the presence of the LORD "from roaming about on the earth," (Job. 1:7) the LORD brought Job to Satan's attention, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). Satan objected, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a

hedge about him and his house nad all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face" (Job 1:9-11). God said, "Satan, have at it. But don't hurt him."

So Job experiences the trial of losing his ten children, and all of his wealth on one day. How does Job respond? "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." The writer of the book comments, "Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God" (Job. 1:22). Job's response to his trials demonstrated the proof of His faith. Ultimately it gave glory to God because He was shown to be worthy of our worship. This is because when we continue to worship when things aren't going so well for us that demonstrates how great our faith in Him actually is.

When the second test came upon Job, (i.e. the loss of his health), his response was the same. He refused to curse God. Rather "He entrusted himself to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Peter 4:19). God used Job to teach Satan a lesson about faith. Those with genuine faith will continue to rejoice and worship the LORD even when experiencing difficulties in this life. That lesson is repeated over and over and over again as the people of God place their faith in God even when suffering comes. So when suffering comes upon you know that "something cosmic is at stake.

You have an opportunity to glorify God in a special way. You have the opportunity to demonstrate:

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold.
I'd rather have Jesus than riches untold.
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land .
I'd rather be led by his nail pierced hand,
Than to be the king of a vast domain
Or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today. [6]

As your faith is demonstrated to be genuine, it will be rewarded someday with the riches of your inheritance in heaven. That's the point found in the middle of verse 7, ... "your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire." Your faith and trust in the LORD that rejoices even in sufferings is worth far more than the biggest, purest hunk of gold ever discovered upon the earth, because, it's the means through which we enter heaven. As we trust in the Lord and in the sacrifice of His Son, we are purified from our sins and made worthy to enter into his glory. Do you see the glories of heaven?

I close with one final illustration.

In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. She'd already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. The weather was foggy and chilly; she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for fifteen hours. When she begged to be taken out of the water along the way, her mother in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn't until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was less than half a mile away. At a news conference the next day she said, "All I could see was the fog. ... I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it. [7]

Indeed two months later she was able to swim from Catalina Island to the shores of California through the same sort of fog as she kept her goal in mind. "If I could have seen the shore, I would have made it." I don't know what troubles and difficulties you are facing today but a gaze heavenward ought to be of great help to you regarding your attitude of facing your trials today. The realities of heaven ought to give you hope and joy and confidence to face the trials that come. "Suffer Now; Glory Later; Rejoice through it all."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 2, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Richard Cecil, *Memoirs of the Rev. John Newton*, p. 108, as quoted by John Piper at http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1485_John_Newton_The_Tough_Roots_of_His_Habitual_Tenderness/

[2] Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, pp. 17-18.

[3] This message was preached the day after Michigan had been upset by Appalachian State, a division II school. It was a big upset, as Michigan was expecting to be in the running for the national title.

[4] (The God I Love, p. 340)

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 341.

[6] Rhea F. Miller wrote these excellent words

[7] Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, xxii.