

Fierce Joy and Hard Providences

1 Peter 1:6-9

Introduction – We considered carefully the first five verses. Foreknowledge, election, sanctification, perseverance, forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and heaven, just to mention a few. But now, we must consider two topics which are very difficult to get your hands around – especially both at the same time. Joy and trials

The Christian's Experience – (v6) *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,”*. A Christian can experience both a fierce joy in the mercies of God and, at the same time, the turmoil of human grief due to the difficulties and trials of this life.

“In this” – This joy is rooted in what the power of God has done and revealed (vv1-5). Contrary to what we do as modern evangelicals, this joy is not something we whip up.

“greatly rejoice” – It is possible that this verb is a command (Matt 5:17), and even if it is not, we can find this commanded elsewhere (Phil 4:4, James 1).

“grieved” – We live in a world of hard providences, and there are times of real grief. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. We are not to take our doctrine of absolute sovereignty and smack it in the face of one who is hurting. At the same time, we are called to rejoice in the trials because of what we have been promised. Our inheritance is untouchable (vv 4-5), and our trials are ultimately producing glory (v7).

“a little while” – Everything here withers away (v24), including the difficulties. Peter is contrasting this to the description of our inheritance.

“if need be” – One who thinks he doesn't need trials either thinks too highly of himself, or does not understand the purpose of trials.

“various trials” – They are numerous (Psalm 42:7) and of such a variety we are tempted to think God has forgotten us (Is 49:14). There will be temptations of the flesh, the hard thorns of this fallen world, hatred (John 15:18-20), and persecutions for your faith (2 Tim 3:12). But a healthy view of our depravity, God's holiness, and our inheritance by grace will keep us from trying to figure out ‘what did I do to deserve this?’

Making ‘Good’ Even Better – 1 Peter 1:7 *“that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,”*. If you were told that your gold was being made more pure and valuable, would you want to stop the fire?

Another Contrast – Gold, riches, perishables are the wrong place to seek comfort and joy. Nothing wrong with riches, but realize how little they compare to your incorruptible inheritance. Is it all despised for the sake of Christ? (Phil 3:7-8).

Faith Well Tested – This keeps us from the sin of presumption (Matt 26:33-35), which Peter knew well. The truth of our weakness in faith is made evident, and that faith is strengthened through the practice of it, just as the gold is made more pure through the fire.

Praise, Honor, and Glory – The reward is yours as you pass through the trials. Once again, kept by God's power, and with an eye to His reward, you are called to persevere by faith. Your name will be confessed before God and angels (Rev 3:5). You will be set on thrones (Rev 3:21). His inheritance will be yours.

Seeing is Not Necessary to Believing – 1 Peter 1:8-9 *“whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”* Peter had seen Jesus, but these believers, like you, have not seen Him face to face. What matters, though, is not what you can see, but whom you love.

Joy Inexpressible – How do we describe it? That's the point. Especially to the man of reason, without the Spirit of God, it never makes any sense (1 Cor 2:14). But to the believer this joy is ‘full of glory’ – it is weighty, full, and all-encompassing. It produces love which is manifest in obedience to Jesus from the heart in everything and at whatever cost.

The Goal – The end of your faith is your salvation. It will be the final consummation of all things. Everything we hope for, everything we strive for, finds its end in this. And we are to think of this corporately and covenantally, not simply individually.

The Making of Revival – Christianity is ‘an experimental religion’, as the puritans put it. Do not let our doctrines of God's full sovereignty ‘from faith to faith’ keep you from believing, pursuing, and working out your salvation with fear and trembling. A consummated marriage still finds the marriage-bed a holy and delightful place. So too, at our meetings of covenant renewal and in the sacraments we seal our love to Christ. But all of this is only efficacious by the work of the Spirit and not by anything we can bring to it.

The Objective/The Subjective – True revival must be rooted in the objective truths of the faith. True revival must also be rooted in the work of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of sinners as those truths are proclaimed. We have not seen this kind of revival for some time.

No Joy? What Do We Do? – Repent and believe (Psalm 51:12). Patiently persevere and plead with the Lord in humility for the fire of revival.