

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

REJOICING IN OUR SALVATION II

Read 1 Peter 1:3-12

Introduction

As we have learnt last week, hope, in the world's phrase, refers only to an uncertain good, for all worldly hopes are wishing, built upon sand, and the world's hope view of heaven are blind and groundless conjectures. But the hope of the sons of the living God is a living hope, not only as to its object, but as to its effect also. It enlivens and comforts in all distresses, enables to meet and get over all difficulties.

The mercy of God is the spring of all this; yes, great mercy and manifold mercy. And this well-grounded hope of salvation, is an active and living principle of obedience in the soul of the believer. The matter of a Christian's joy is the remembrance of what is laid up for him. It is incorruptible, it cannot come to nothing, it is an estate that cannot be spent. Also undefiled; this signifies its purity and perfection. And it fades not; is not sometimes more or less pleasant, but ever the same, pleasant all the time.

We continue with the revelation Peter is sharing with us in his letter:

Rejoicing in Spite of Suffering

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 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, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 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.” (vv6-9)

We especially rejoice in God's keeping power when we are grieved by various trials, knowing that He will keep us as our faith is tested by fire. Sometimes it is thought that a strong Christian will never be grieved in a trial. The idea is that a Christian should be like Superman; though bullets are shot at Superman, they all bounce off of his chest. Yet Peter here tells us that there is a “need be” not only for the various trials, but more especially that there is a “need be” for being grieved itself. God has a purpose not only for the trial but also for the heavy grief we feel in the trial.

The phrase “various trials” literally, means ‘many-coloured’ and was used to describe ‘the skin of a leopard, the different-coloured veining of marble, or an embroidered robe.’ So, it is trials of various types.

Faith... tested by fire: Our faith isn't tested because God doesn't know how much or what kind of faith we have. It is tested because we often are ignorant of how much or what kind of faith we have. God's purpose in testing is to display the enduring quality of our faith.

Someone said: “Indeed, it is the honour of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, ‘I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties?’ Who knows whether you have any faith? Shall a man say, ‘I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it?’ Is this to the honour and praise of your faith? Do you think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to you any great reward? If so, you are mightily mistaken.”

If gold is fit to be tested and purified by fire, then how much more our faith, which is far more precious than gold? God has a great and important purpose in testing our faith.

- Faith is tested to show that it is sincere faith or true faith.
- Faith is tested to show the strength of faith.
- Faith is tested to purify it, to burn away the dross from the gold.

Gold is one of the most durable of all materials. Yet it too will one day perish, but our faith will not.

Receiving the end of your faith: The end of your faith is the return of Jesus and the ultimate salvation of your souls. Testing and trials are inevitable as long as we are on this side of the end of your faith. As long as we do not see the God we serve we must endure through trials and face them with faith and joy.

The phrase “whom having not seen you love” does not apply to Peter. Peter knew that though he had seen Jesus (both before and after the resurrection), almost every Christian in the early church had not seen Jesus. Nevertheless, they loved Him. Jesus was no less real because they had not seen Him.

The word translated “joy inexpressible” “occurs only here in the New Testament and describes a joy so profound as to be beyond the power of words to express.”

The Witness of Prophets and Angels

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.” (vv10-12)

It was important to Peter — and to all the New Testament writers — to demonstrate that their teaching was no novelty, but that it was testified beforehand by the prophets. Understanding this made salvation so much greater in the mind of Peter’s afflicted readers. The prophets of the Old Testament longed to see the grace of the New Covenant to come. Prophesying by the Spirit of Christ, they knew something of His sufferings and glories, but far less than they longed to know.

One may only imagine how excited Isaiah would have been to read the Gospel of John. The Old Testament prophets knew so much; yet much was hidden to them, including the character of the Church (Ephesians 3:4-6) and the very essence of life and immortality (2 Timothy 1:10).

Do you take your salvation for granted? You shouldn't. The Old Testament prophets found themselves speaking about this salvation by the Spirit. The kind of salvation you and I experience is much more complete, much greater than that experienced by even the greatest of the Old Testament prophets -- John the Baptist (Luke 7:28). The prophets tried to search out what this salvation was all about. How about you? Will you search out its meaning as diligently as the prophets who foretold it? Our salvation is great! It is glorious! It is even the subject of angelic speculation! Part of God’s eternal purpose is to show His wisdom to the angelic beings through His work with the church (Ephesians 3:10-11). God wants the angels to look in on what He does in the church, and the idea is that the angels are bending over with intense interest and desire to learn. And it is ours, a wonderful gift granted to us in whom God has sparked faith.

