

An Unshakable Joy

1 Pet. 1:3-12

INTRO

God's people have long been marked by their joy. The Psalms repeatedly instruct believers to rejoice in God:

Ps. 32:11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

And the Psalmists also testify to their own experience of joy in God:

Ps. 43:3-4 Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

Jesus himself taught that he came to bring joy:

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

And, Paul informs us that:

Rom. 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

So it is no surprise that the early church was

Acts 2:46 ...day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes... with glad and generous hearts.

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and when our Christian life is complete we will "enter into the joy of [our] master" (Matt. 25:21).

Some of us may think, however, that joy is unrealistic for our polarized society. We live in a day when evil is called good, and good is called evil. Our world is increasingly antagonistic to God.

Everywhere we look there are swift cultural changes – changes that

threaten our very sense of who we are. We see politicians cheering as they pass a bill that permits the murder of unborn babies up through the ninth month! There are other injustices that are not addressed, and now more than ever, following Jesus has consequences. If you speak out, you might be shouted down. If people know you are a Bible believer, they may assume you are a hater. Things seem like they are just going to get worse.

Others among us are weighed down with other trials today. Loved ones and friends are at death's door. Or perhaps even more tragically loved ones and friends have hurt us and perhaps even abandoned the faith. Some may be weighed down with their own failures and besetting sins. Relationship problems or challenges at work (or at finding work). Following Christ is a lot harder than they thought, and they may be tempted to throw in the towel.

The passage we will read this morning speaks to people with these same concerns and more. They lived as exiles/strangers in an antagonistic society that would soon break out into a full-fledged "fiery" persecution against Christianity. Some of them had lost their jobs, others were being slandered. Some were trapped in a relationship that offered no hope. Yet Peter said they were rejoicing even as they were suffering. Their joy proved to be "an unshakable joy." I trust we will be encouraged today as we read the text together.

PRAY, READ: 1 Peter 1:3–12

TITLE: "An Unshakable Joy"

Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher from the late 1800s, when preaching on just the first three verses of our text, called this a "string of pearls." Most commentaries group this section together as "praise for salvation." There are lots of reasons to praise and lots of benefits of salvation strung together in our verses. But I take my direction

today from the first part of vs. 6 “In this you rejoice.” This points back to verses 3-5 and also forward through verses 6-7, with joy returning as a theme in verses 8-9. So I take all of this to be talking about salvation joy, and if you’re taking notes here is how I’m dividing the passage today:

- 1) Source of our joy (v. 3-5)
- 2) Sorrow in our joy (v. 6-7)
- 3) Sweetness of our Joy (v. 8-9)
- 4) Sharing of our joy (v. 10-12)

I. Source of our Joy (vs. 3-5)

A. New Life

1. God caused us to be born again
2. Through the Resurrection power of Christ
 - We are united with Christ
 - Christ’s resurrection is the beginning of New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”)
3. Living Hope – new life within us

B. New Longing

1. Hope is a confident expectation – they were expecting the “inheritance”
 - No longer citizens of this world, but citizens of a heavenly country (Phil. 3:20 “...our citizenship is in heaven...”)
2. 1 Pet. 1:1 and 2:11 refer to Peter’s audience as “elect exiles of the dispersion” and “sojourners and exiles”

- Just like Israel was dispersed after being exiled from the Promised Land, so these Gentile believers were following God in a pagan land as sojourners.
 - They were like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were “looking forward to the city... whose designer and builder is God... they were strangers and exiles on the earth... seeking a homeland... they desire[d] a better country.... a heavenly one... ” (Heb. 11:10, 13-14, 16)
3. The inheritance they were hoping for is imperishable, undefiled and unfading!
 - It cannot be shaken by the stock market falling or government shutdowns or any such things.

C. New Loyalty

1. The believers had this new life and longing because they had a new loyalty.
 - 1:2 they were chosen “for obedience to Jesus Christ” and “for sprinkling with his blood”
 - Like the old covenant, which had the Israelites agreeing to obey the book of the covenant followed by Moses’ sprinkling them with blood (see Exodus 24:7-8) – so here Peter refers to the new covenant being inaugurated with blood – they are now following Christ – believing in him and pledging to obey him.
 - The new covenant applying to us is seen in the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:20) and often throughout Hebrews (10:22, 29; 12:24; 13:20).
2. They are being shielded/guarded by God’s power – through faith.

- Albert Barnes: “[God] does not keep us by the mere exertion of power, but he excites faith in our hearts, and makes that the means of keeping us.”
 - Eternal security does not mean we don’t have to continue believing. There are some who “believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.” (Lk. 8:13) True believers are those whose faith continues. (see 1 Jn. 2:19)
 - Once SAVED, always saved.
 - Those who are truly saved will continue to believe – because they are “kept by God’s power through faith!”
 - God works in them “both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2: 13)
3. God reserves the inheritance for these believers
- Charles Spurgeon: “The inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for the inheritance.”

Because of their faith and the new life within them, believers have a new longing and loyalty. God even pledges to keep their faith strong, even as he keeps our heavenly inheritance sure. All of this results in a great joy: vs. 6 starts with “In this you rejoice.” Their joy is based on the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time – the time when they finally reach that Heavenly country. Joy indeed! *But...* vs. 6 goes on to say “though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials...”

II. Sorrow in our Joy (vs. 6-7)

A. Periodic “though now..., if necessary”

- Everyone is not enduring a trial right now, and every minute of your life is not a trial of your faith.

- The Christian life is not an endless succession of bad experiences.
- But from time to time, they are trials (and trials can seem to last forever when we are in the storm).

B. Passing “for a little while”

- But trials do not last forever, they are “for a little while”
- Even those called to suffer until death, find that “this light momentary affliction is [prepared] for [them] an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17).

C. Plentiful “various trials”

- By plentiful I mean “manifold” or “varied” – trials come in all shapes and sizes.
- Here is a list of what Peter’s audience was enduring in their various trials:
 - Life of a sojourner/exile (1:1, 2:11)
 - Mistreatment by employers/masters (2:19-20)
 - Marriage strains (3:1-7)
 - Insults and evils done against them (3:9)
 - Slander (3:16)
 - Striving against their own sins and the passions of their flesh (4:1-2, 2:11 – cf. Heb. 12:3-4)
 - A fiery trial of persecution and perhaps martyrdom (4:12)
 - Enduring the attack of the Devil (5:8-10)
- Poverty, loss of property and imprisonment were problems for the believers James and Hebrews were written to; and we can assume similar trials were facing the audience of Peter.

D. Planned “if necessary”

- Such trials are necessary – when God plans them for us.
- Suffering for our own stupidity or in consequence of our bad behavior is not in view here (see 4:12-19)
- God has plans to bring trials into our lives for a purpose
- Trials don’t surprise God – they shouldn’t surprise us. They should be expected:
 - 2 Tim. 3:12 *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*
 - Acts 14:22 *“Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”*
 - John 16:33 *“...In the world you will have tribulation....”*

E. Productive “may be found to result in”

- God uses trials to prove the genuineness of our faith.
- John Calvin explains the metaphor used here: *“The argument is from the less to the greater; for if gold, a corruptible metal, is deemed of so much value that we prove it by fire, that it may become really valuable, what wonder is it that God should require a similar trial as to faith, since faith is deemed by him so excellent?”*
- Prov. 17:3 *“The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts.”*
- The trial proves that our faith is genuine – that it endures beyond the time of testing (it doesn’t

wither in the heat, but the plant of faith survives; cf. Luke 8:13).

- Charles Spurgeon on the trial of faith: *“The very gift of faith is a hint to you that you will want it; that at certain points and places you will especially require it, and that, at all points, and in every place, you will really need it. You cannot live without faith: for again and again we are told- “the just shall live by faith.”... And if God give thee great faith, my dear brother, thou must expect great trials; for, in proportion as thy faith shall grow, thou wilt have to do more, and endure more. Little boats may keep close to shore, as becomes little boats; but if God make thee a great vessel, and load thee with a rich freight, he means that thou shouldest know what great billows are, and should feel their fury till thou seest ‘his wonders in the deep.’”*
- Other Scriptures testify to the maturity that trials bring:
- Rom. 5:3-5 *“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*
- James 1:2-4 *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

F. Praiseworthy “may be found to result in praise and glory and honor”

1. Trials mature us and lead to a faith that endures and is found praiseworthy in the presence of Christ, no less.
2. If the faith matured by trial is praised at the revelation of Christ – we have an obligation to embrace the trials that bring us this maturity.
3. Too often our response to trials is as a natural man:
 - Guilt “if only”.
 - Confusion “Why is this happening? Is God punishing me? Does God love me?”
 - Fear “What will become of me?”
 - Anger “How can they do that to me?”
 - Envy “Why aren’t they suffering like I am?”
 - Self-Pity “Won’t somebody feel sorry for me?”
 - Hopelessness & Despair “There’s nothing I can do, I’m doomed. I’m trapped and will never get out.”
2. Instead we should approach trials seeing that they are planned for our good:
 - Trials are TESTS (which only last “a little while”)
 - They are even GIFTS (see James 1:17)
 - They produce ENDURANCE and MATURITY
 - They reveal that our faith is GENUINE
 - Which brings us great ASSURANCE & HOPE
 - Trials can be “counted all joy” (see James 1:2)

III. Sweetness of our Joy (vs. 8-9)

Joy is returned to again in vs. 8. This joy is sweet and can be treasured through any trial.

A. Unseen, yet Known and Loved

1. “We walk by faith and not by sight”

2. Since we believe in Christ, we can see and know Him as he is – and to know Christ is to love him.
3. Being a Christian is to love the Lord:
 - Eph. 6:24 “Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.”
 - 1 Cor. 16:22 “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed...”

B. Unspeakable, yet Full of Glory

1. Our joy is inexpressible – can’t be explained to unbelievers.
2. Our experience is of wonder, most of us have times in our spiritual life of unutterable emotion and communion with Christ.
3. This kind of deep joy lasts in trial and keeps us rooted to Christ in faith.
4. It is a sweet taste of the Lord’s goodness – 1 Pet. 2:3 “If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

C. Unfinished, yet Presently Experienced Salvation

5. Our souls have not yet been finally saved (glorification).
6. But we experience now the salvation of our souls, since we have new life.
7. This means we are liberated from the power of sin (even though we still suffer with the presence of sin).
8. We can experience a foretaste of eternal salvation through our communion with Christ (which is sweeter and deeper only as we grow in our faith and obedience.)

IV. Sharing of our Joy (vs. 10-12)

A. Not Shared with OT saints (vs. 10-12a)

- Our experience of salvation blessing and joy is unparalleled.
- The prophets of old longed to see and know what we enjoy.

B. Not Shared with Angels (vs. 12b)

- We know things Angels only wish they knew.

C. Shared with Christ (2:21; 4:13)

- Our joy in suffering is a sharing of what Christ had first. He endured the cross “for the joy that was set before him” (Heb. 12:2) And he suffered for us “leaving [us] an example [for us to] follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Indeed we can rejoice that we “share Christ’s sufferings” (1 Pet. 4:13; cf. Phil. 3:10)

D. Shared by believers around the world (5:8-10)

- 1 Pet. 5:8-9 *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”*

He cares for us (5:7). He calls on the Elders to serve the flock faithfully to help them endure the trial. He wants the spiritually gifted to use their gifts for the benefit of all. He calls us to follow the example of Christ and realize our privileged position as God’s people.

He grounds our joy ultimately in the great salvation work of God on our behalf. The day when Christ comes and we enter our eternal inheritance in Heaven is the day when all wrongs will be righted, and our suffering will be seen to have been worth it all. Our joy looks back to our salvation, looks up to our eternal reward, and to the One who saved us. It is Jesus that we worship with inexpressible joy full of glory.

We trust God who has promised (in Isaiah 43:2): *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.”* Why? Because a couple verses later he says *“Fear not, for I am with you...”* (Is. 43:5).

Perhaps you have never trusted Christ, or you made a profession a long time ago but you don’t have the joy and communion talked about here. Perhaps trials are weighing you down and you seem to have no joy. I ask you to call out to God in faith and cast your cares on him. Talk to one of our elders or anyone who is older than you in the faith. Don’t let the moment pass – make sure that you have a genuine faith.

PRAY -----

END-----

CONCLUSION

Trials are challenging, and 1 Peter is not prescribing a glib joy that denies your true feelings. There is sorrow in the trial, but a deeper joy can get us through. Peter calls us to cast our cares on God, knowing

BENEDICTION

1 Pet. 5:9b-10 "... knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Quotes from Spurgeon were found here:

https://www.preceptaustin.org/sermons_by_spurgeon_-_1_peter_1

Quote by Albert Barnes was found here:

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/1-peter-1.html>

Quote from John Calvin was found in *Calvin's Commentaries, Volume 22, 1 Peter*, (Baker, 2005) pg. 33.