

1st PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 1:6-9

Lesson #4

Introduction

Salvation - The Outcome of Our Faith

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

3 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, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 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; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:1-9 (NASB)

Now that we've read our verses we can immediately see why it was necessary to begin our reading at verse one, even though our study text for this message is verses six through nine. In the field of science there's a principle known as cause and effect. According to this principle every effect must have a cause, nothing just happens for no reason. It might be said that our text verses for this message, verses six through nine, are the resultant effects of the preceding cause verses, one through five. Our verse, six begins with "In this you greatly rejoice." Clearly we have to know what the "in this" is referring to, for our discussion to make any sense.

Peter has quite meticulously laid out for us the cause. He has told us that we are among a small group who was known to God from before creation, and chosen by Him to be set apart, that is to be sanctified, for a specific purpose of His own. And this choosing, this sanctifying, includes a work performed within us by his Spirit, which work brings us into obedience to his Son Jesus, and affords us forgiveness for our sins by His vicarious substitutionary death. But much more, it also promises us a living hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And then goes on to assure us that all of this is protected by the power of God, and reserved for us in heaven. And thus we have, at least a partial glimpse, of that which we're calling the initial cause. So now it's fitting to move on to that which we assert to be the rightful and proper "effects" of such a cause.

What effects might such a cause produce? Well, most certainly, if one rightly understands the cause, and believes that cause refers to themselves, then it's certainly understandable that they might greatly rejoice in hearing such news. In fact it's quite difficult to imagine any news that could be more exciting. I can't even imagine any news that could exceed this news, any news that would be greater in value and encouragement, any news that could offer more comfort or afford more security than that which Peter offers in his first five verses. We've been told that the greatest of all possible conceivable gifts has been granted to us by God himself, and is forever protected by Him and reserved for us in heaven.

So the next sentence, “in this you greatly rejoice” almost seems over simplistic. News such as this should illicit a response that approaches hysterical. We should be completely and thoroughly overwhelmed by such a cause, to the point that we can hardly find words to express our elation. This is one of those situations where if Peter were presenting this message from a church pulpit, the entire crowd should burst into mass applause, and shouts of hallelujah, with jumping and shouting and weeping and rejoicing. Now before I cause a panic, no I’m not a charismatic, but if one comprehends, and truly believes everything that Peter has said in the first five verses, then they have heard the greatest news ever presented in the universe to any human being; so, greatly rejoicing still seems to be an understatement.

But, this little phrase by Peter turns out to be the introduction to another thought. He goes on to say “*even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.*” Before Peter starts to talk about the trials, he’s already given them all the encouragement that he possibly can for endurance. He says - even though now for a little while. What might he mean by a little while? Well, the truth is, there’s a couple of things he could mean by “a little while.” He could mean for just a brief period of time in their present lives, or, he could mean for their entire life here on earth as compared to their whole life in eternity. The fact is, he really doesn’t try to qualify what he means by the term. Because either way, the result is the same. Peter says that if it’s necessary for them to endure trials in their life, it will be because God has an intended purpose for those trials, and furthermore, that they may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Rom 8:28-29)

In verse 7, Peter uses the analogy of gold which is refined by putting it through fire. The fire purifies the gold and attests to its authenticity. The point is that just as gold is purified and authenticated by the fiery testing of the kettle, in like manner faith in Christ Jesus is both purified and authenticated by the fiery trials of life. A faith that has been tested by trials is compared to gold that has been refined by fire. Such testing purifies, by separating the true from the false, and authenticates that which is real from that which is not. Untested faith might be compared to a bar of untested gold, you can’t really be sure of what you’ve got. It might be real, or it might not, so the testing provides the assurance of authenticity that brings confidence to the holder. Would you pay a lot of money for a bar of metal that someone told you was gold without some kind of testing? In the same way do you want to stand at the end of the age, before the throne of Almighty God, with something that you believe is saving faith, but has never been tested or tried? That’s a very dangerous time to test the authenticity, but there will be many who do just that, and most will be sadly disappointed.

And this is exactly what James, the half brother of Jesus was talking about in his epistle when he wrote the following:

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4 (NASB)

When I read verses like these, I tend to not want to deal with them. On the one hand, intellectually, I understand that the testing of our faith, through various trials, has substantial, undeniable benefits; but still, I find myself not looking forward to enduring them. But then, on the other hand, I absolutely do understand, and fully agree with the truth that these verses present. I do not want to stand at the end of my life with an untested, untried, unproven kind of faith. In fact, as I look back on my life, it is the trials through which I have passed, and the testings that I have seen, that unquestionably afford me the most confidence that this faith in which I trust is truly a gift of God and is protected by Him.

It is without doubt the trials and testing of life that affords us the confidence that we have in our faith. Life would certainly be more pleasant without them, but the certainty of our future would not be as secure. Therefore, we may look back over them in retrospect and thank God that He had the great wisdom and mercy to put us through sufficient trials and testing that we might have the assurance of our faith. And this is what James understood, and the reason that he told us to count it as joy. It isn’t the trials themselves that bring us joy, but it is the endurance that is borne out of those trials that brings us great joy and confidence. It is the practical, experiential perfecting of our faith. Remember Job?

But the verse goes on further to say something very interesting. It says that this testing by fire “*may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Now when we read about praise and glory and honor we probably all tend to immediately think entirely of the Father and of Jesus Christ.

And certainly this is proper, because He is the source and power of all praise and honor and glory. But an examination of this verse, within its context, implies something different. The implication here is that the trials and testing of the saints themselves, which is further said to be “the proof of **their** faith” and which purifies and completes their transformation process to Christlikeness, is the subject of **this** praise and glory and honor.

The implication here is clearly that the testing and the fiery trials that the saints are called on to endure are not for nothing. They do not go unnoticed, and they do not go unrecognized, and they do not go unrewarded. The implication of this verse is that the praise and honor and glory is that recognition given **by** the Lord Jesus Christ, **to** all His faithful followers at His returning. Certainly the primary praise, the primary glory, the primary honor, belongs entirely to Christ Jesus, but the Lord Jesus himself is pleased to share all that’s His with those who took up their cross and followed Him at whatever the cost. And this is the encouragement, not only do trials authenticate and refine our faith, but they form the basis for which our Lord and Savior may share with us, that praise and glory and honor, which He himself has attained, both for himself and for us for all eternity. And we might add that this faith which is being tested and refined is not human produced faith, but divine gift faith, that was both given by God as a gift, and is now being protected by Him as well.

We, who, apart from Him, can do nothing whatsoever, are invited, solely by His grace and great love for us, to forever share and partake in all that He is, and all that He’s done, as His companions and faithful worshipers. Does this, I wonder, make us understand, and even as brother James declared, **joyful** at the trials and testings of life, because we understand what is the end result of such things? That every trial and test is an opportunity for recognition by our Lord.

I don’t know the answer to that question. I don’t know if it makes trials and testing any easier, but it certainly does make them understandable, so that we don’t stand and ring our hands, and shake our heads, and whine and cry and complain to God for every little thing, or even big things, that seem to us to be constantly going wrong in our lives. Are they going wrong, or, are they in reality, a vital part of that which God has ordained to make us right and fitting for His kingdom? Yes, I’m afraid so, I believe, because the scriptures declare, that God has purposely ordained that it is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22) Oh how I wish that our modern day churches would preach and teach these sound, biblical, time honored truths, instead of the popular, light hearted, “gospel fiction” that’s currently presented as contemporary evangelism. Nevertheless, moving on now to:

Verse 8:

8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

In this verse Peter acknowledges that he’s speaking to a group who has not actually seen the Lord Jesus. He seems to understand that the ones that he’s writing to didn’t walk with Him, and talk with Him, and spend years of their time with Him. They didn’t see Him heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, and perform all the diverse miracles that Peter saw with his own eyes. They probably didn’t see Him crucified on the cross, and then talk to Him again in person after his resurrection. And they certainly didn’t stand and watch Him, with their own eyes, ascend off of the earth up into the air out of sight. Peter had seen and witnessed all of these. And because of this, Peter says that even though they haven’t seen the Lord Jesus, nevertheless they love Him. This is a notable distinction isn’t it? It’s one thing to have personally witnessed all of the things that Christ did and then believe it, but it’s altogether another thing entirely to believe the testimony of others about something you’ve never seen yourself.

In fact this is one of the chief criticisms of the unbelievers isn’t it? A Christian really has no tangible evidence to provide, only their witness to things which are internal and invisible. Have you ever heard it said “show us this Jesus, or one of his miracles, and then maybe we’ll believe in Him.” That’s not an uncommon reaction is it? But yet we know from the Scriptures that miracles have never produced genuine belief. From the time of Moses, to the days of Jesus himself, miracles did not produce believers. Miracles substantiate the faith of believers, but they do not produce faith in unbelievers, as the Scriptures have so plainly demonstrated. And this is a testimony to what the Scriptures teach us, that faith isn’t a human persuasion, or a logical conclusion, or an emotional reaction, but a gracious gift of God.

And this gets to the heart of Peter's statement here in verse eight. He says *"and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."* Now I ask, how is that possible? These people have never seen Jesus in the past, they don't see Him now, they didn't witness any tangible evidences, but yet they are said to love Him and believe in Him, and that love and belief produces a joy too marvelous to express, and filled with glory.

How can these things be? Where is the evidence by which they were persuaded? What is the logic behind their exuberance? What stirred their emotions to such heights? The answer, absolutely nothing that can be seen, or touched, or presented as evidence. When you think about it, it's not surprising that unbelievers consider Christians to be foolish and even demented. We seem to be persuaded by nothing of substance at all.

And it is precisely at this point where many of our dear synergistic, Arminian, semi-Pelagian brothers and sisters err so tragically. They do not understand the nature of saving faith, that it's divine and not human. That it can never be secured or obtained by logical persuasions, or emotional stirrings, or even miraculous works. Genuine saving faith is an invisible, intangible, divine gift of God, given by His grace alone, through the faithful preaching of the gospel, without any clever manipulations, attractive worldly embellishments, or critical omissions. And when presented as such, the respondents will be **two** things. They will be **true**, and they will be **few**.

Jesus himself was thoroughly willing to have them be few, so that they would be true. John chapter 6 demonstrates this point most clearly. In this chapter, Jesus begins with a following that had accumulated around Him of well over 5000 people, so He spoke words to these people that would intentionally create a division, and when the chapter ends the thousands have all departed, and He's left with only His 12, and perhaps a small handful more.

But let me be careful to stay on point here. And that point is that a genuine love of the Lord Jesus, and genuine belief in Him has never been based on what you see with your eyes, or touch with your hands, but is something that is invisible and internal. And this is because it is a product not of men, or of any human origin, but is the evidence, the corroboration, the authentication, of the divine, but invisible gift of saving faith. It is the undeniable fruit of a divine work wrought upon the soul of man by the Spirit of God. And therefore, it does not depend on things that we have seen with our eyes, or touched with our hands. Jesus told Nicodemus that this was something that you couldn't see with your eyes but you certainly could witness its effects, and such is the nature of saving faith. It is inconceivable, and quite impossible, that genuine saving faith be present, and fervent love for Jesus be absent. They are quite inseparable.

On the one hand this all tends to sound like nothing more than invisible abstract principles, which in fact is what they are at their core. Genuine saving faith, belief in the truth, is an abstract principle; by that I mean it is intangible truth, it exists as an invisible, but undeniable reality. And because it is true, and substantive, it always produces visible, subjective results. Paul told the Philippians to work out their salvation through tangible actions, because it was God who was working invisibly within them, both to produce the will and to enable the work for His own good pleasure. (Phi 2:12-13)

This very same, invisible, indwelling, Spirit that steers the hearts of men, and enables their godly workings, also produces a fervent and genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and an unflinching belief in all the things that He says; and whether we've ever seen Him with our eyes or not, makes absolutely no difference. Our love is not abated, nor our belief in His words and promises diminished. Now, moving on to the next verse:

Verse 9:

9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls

After several sentences, which we've now broken into verses, of divine revelations and great encouragements, Peter puts the finishing touch on the whole section with what we might call a summary statement. He says that because of all of the preceding things he's discussed, there is a final outcome. He began by telling us about God's divine purpose for a particular chosen group before he even commenced creation. He went on to tell us that God, for reasons quite His own, and through means entirely His own, went about calling out His chosen group from among all of the multitudes of

humanity. He set them apart from the rest by performing a work upon them by his Holy Spirit. He established an inheritance for this group which He has held in reserve in heaven. The chosen instrument by which He implements His setting apart, His sanctification, is the instrument of faith. Which faith is entirely a gift from himself, unattainable by any other means. He further protects His elect by protecting this gift of faith.

At this point let me make a distinction. Some of the most common words among Christians are the words grace and faith. It's very common to almost use them interchangeably. But these two words nevertheless maintain their unique characteristics. Grace and faith certainly have a very close relationship, but they are not the same. I regularly hear Grace spoken of as an active agent or power, but this is not a proper interpretation. There is absolutely no doubt that we are saved by grace through faith. When we use grace we say it is by grace, but when we say faith, we say it is through faith. Grace, in its clearest definition, is a description of the heart attitude of God toward His elect. It is not a force, or an instrument, it is a mindset, a heart attitude, and forms the basis upon which God decided to take particular actions.

The term grace, when properly applied, is the word that we use to draw the distinction between two methods. One method, the one most common to mankind, is "works," which means that man must do something himself to attain a result. Grace, on the other hand, is used to signify an act of God performed by his own choosing which requires absolutely nothing whatsoever on the part of man. Thus, grace, as a principal, is the antithesis of works.

However, Faith is the tangible instrument, the tool, which God uses to implement the salvation of his elect, because of his gracious heart attitude toward them, and as the best means to display His glory. Grace is the principle, the heart attitude, and faith is the tool, the instrument of implementation. It's very common to hear someone declare that we were saved by grace. This is absolutely true, it was by His grace that God chose to implement our salvation through an act entirely of His own doing, completely apart from anything we were capable of doing by ourselves. This is grace.

But it wasn't grace that implemented our salvation, it was faith. We can see this illustrated in our earlier verse that we studied (v.5) where Peter told us that we were protected by the power of God through **what?** We were protected by the power of God through grace? No, we were protected by the power of God through faith, yes through faith, and that gift of faith was afforded us by the principle of grace, not by works, so that no one could ever boast, even to the smallest degree, in their own participation. (Eph 2:8-9) Salvation is by grace because grace humbles man. It says that man is totally incapable of any participation whatsoever, so God must do it all, and therefore gets all the glory and all the honor.

Because of God's graciousness we are saved through faith, and we are protected by the power of God through His direct protection of that faith. The saving gift that He gives, He also protects with His own power, so that it will, without possibility of failure, have the predestined final outcome. And what is the final outcome of this gracious gift of saving faith? According to Peter's declaration here in verse nine, It is the salvation of our souls.

This certainly sounds wonderful, the salvation of our souls. But just exactly what does that mean? What does the Bible mean when it talks about our soul, and what's it saved from? You see, unless we understand these, at least to some degree, we don't even really know what it means that our souls are saved. And the obvious question is – what about our bodies, don't they get saved? The good news is that the holy Scriptures do provide us with the answers that we need to be able to interpret, and rightly understand, the immense value, and vast ramifications that are implicit within this marvelous statement. But to be able to grasp, to take hold of these great treasures requires some work, some mining if you will, some deep digging and diligent pursuit. And the value that one perceives will be based entirely on the effort that they have expended to grasp these great mysteries of the holy Scriptures.

It far exceeds the scope of this single lesson to answer these questions in detail, but I will give you a brief glimpse of the depth of the ramifications of the salvation of our souls. There are endless discussions on what is the soul, and that's not what I wish to discuss here, but it is generally agreed that whatever exactly the soul might be, it is certainly that part of us that is self-aware, that part of us that knows that we are something, that we exist as a unique entity. Just how it's tied to our physical bodies we don't know, but nevertheless we are aware that there is a part of us that is not just our tangible bodies.

When God scraped up a pile of dirt in His hands and shaped it into a man, and breathed into that dirt the breath of life, that man became a living soul. Whatever this thing is that we call our soul, our life, it was imparted to us from the breath of God. I assure you it did not evolve all by itself, over billions of years, from a rock, or a pool of slime.

And this gift of sentient, self-aware "life" is that which will be saved and preserved eternally. Which means there was some kind of peril from which it escaped. The Scriptures have very much to say regarding the final outcome of those who do not have this gift of saving faith. Those whose hearts loved sin and unrighteousness, who knowingly ignored the Commandments of God and ignored all His warnings. Who thought God took sin lightly, and just gave it a slight shake of His head. These will suffer the wrath of God, forever, in a place that the Scriptures call a lake of fire. It's called a place of deep darkness and despair, and is forever separated entirely from God and His eternal kingdom.

We often hear people make jokes about Hell. We see comical depictions of it in magazines and on television that show it as a tangible place of unrestricted wanton indulgences and fun. They act like it's a big party place where they'll fit right in with all their other friends and finally be able to live a life that's free from all those onerous rules and regulations arbitrarily imposed on mankind by a stern and hateful God. But from the many descriptions and glimpses we get from scriptures, there's very good reason to question the validity of such a concept.

For one thing, it's referred to as the bottomless pit. What if that's literal. What if this lake of fire is a bottomless place without a tangible surface, like an astronaut floating in space, in total darkness that's always on fire, completely and totally isolated, and separated from everything and everyone, forever? No companionship, no comradery, no one to converse with, just an isolated place of sightless darkness and fiery torment, in which to forever and endlessly contemplate your past life of rejection of your holy and righteous creator. To each his own, but this doesn't sound like any kind of party that I ever want to attend. From such as this, I surely, positively, unquestionably, do most certainly and disparately, desire to be forever saved.

But on the other hand, to those who are the chosen, and redeemed, and sanctified. To those who were regenerated and transformed into the likeness of Christ, there is the other aspect of salvation. Not just that of being saved and spared from the torments of hell, but much more than that. For these the salvation of their souls is the eternal preservation of both their completely transformed and perfected souls, and their bodies. Listen to these verses:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.
Phil 3:20-21 (NASB)

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.
1 Cor 15:50-53 (NASB)

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. [But] We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
1 John 3:2 (NASB)

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?
Romans 8:28-31 (NASB)

Conclusion:

With grace as His guiding principle, and faith as His instrument, God chose, predestined, calls, justifies, and transforms to Christlikeness, which thereby glorifies, that chosen body of worshipers to their eternal salvation. To the eternal preservation of their self-aware existence, while still composed of their entire bodies, souls, and spirits. And thus we may, in some small measure, begin to comprehend what is meant by Peter when he says that the **outcome** of this precious gift of **saving faith**, through its cleansing and sanctifying power, is the eternal salvation of our souls.

To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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