

In This You Greatly Rejoice, Part 2



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In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials. 1 Peter 1:6[\[1\]](#)

In Part 1 of this focus on joy in the life of a believer in Jesus Christ, I discussed the manifold reasons why Christians can and should be people of great joy. The Apostle Peter lists some of the many reasons Christians can rejoice in Peter 1:1-5.

Briefly, those reasons include that Christians have been given a new eternal home in heaven with the Creator, thus we are aliens (v1) in whatever nation we call our temporal home.

Additionally, we have been chosen (v1) by the Father and have been and are being sanctified (v2) through the working of God the Holy Spirit in us. This results in our ability to be obedient to Jesus' commands (v2). Preceding this present work in all God's children by faith is the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit (v3), what Christians refer to as the new birth. That was the work of God's great mercy (v3).

The lives of faith we live always keep in view a great hope we have, namely that we will be resurrected just as Jesus was resurrected (v4). Our resurrection brings with it the realization of our blessed inheritance which is being kept in

heaven for us (v4). Even our faith is safe-guarded by our heavenly Father for the blessed day of its final realization in eternity (v5).

Peter's first phrase in verse 6 is based on these truths. In this you greatly rejoice, looks back on these promises of God toward all those who believe. A pivot point occurs right after that phrase. Peter says that we are to rejoice based on the promises of God toward us, "even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials."

In Chapter 4 verses 12-13 of this same letter Peter says to readers:

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

What are we to understand about Peter's sudden shift from joy as a mark of Christian faith to his more sober encouragement to persevere through various trials? Bible scholars and researchers have generally assigned the writing of this letter by Peter to approximately 62-63 AD, which places it during the reign of Emperor Nero. Peter likely wrote this letter from Rome based on his somewhat cryptic use of Babylon as the place of his writing in Chapter 5 verse 13.

Some have surmised that Peter was addressing the persecution that officially began under Nero in his letter. Other's are not convinced that Peter had Nero's persecution in mind. Regardless of who the responsible party was, it is clear from historical accounts that Christians were the subject of often extreme persecution in the areas he mentions in 1:1. All those areas by the way, are in modern day Turkey.

It is important to note that Peter says persevering through trials is a sign of the genuineness of faith in Christ. He uses the word “proof” in verse 7 along with the picture of “fire.” In this sense, fire is used of trials which refine faith, making it more valuable to the individual because faith refined by trials results in a strengthening and a firmer resolve toward obedience to Christ and a greater joy in realizing the promises of God are true and sure.

We know that this is the Father’s desired outcome because Peter says that these various trials are for the “testing” of faith, which is more precious than gold. The refining process of gold separates the impurities and results in a purer precious metal. Peter is using that analogy to make his point that faith tested and refined always results in greater holiness (verses 15-16), thankfulness for and praise of our great God the Lord Jesus Christ, who is worthy of all our honor (v7).

In verses 8-11 Peter discusses the risen Savior who was not presently seen by human eyes (v8), because He has risen and ascended back to His glory (v11). The prophets had foretold of the Christ (v10), who would redeem the creation through His sufferings (v11). This is the glorious message preached by those anointed by the Holy Spirit (v12).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews shared this same perspective on faith. He wrote that “Now faith is the assurance of things hope for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval”[\[2\]](#) In other words when tested by trial these “men of old,” by which the writer means the biblical patriarchs, were found faithful and that the outcome of their faith was glory and honor to the Father.

Peter wrote all of this so that what he desired to share with them in the rest of his letter would have the proper context and basis for the hope and encouragement he sought for them to

hold on to. That is evident starting in verse 13 where we read the transitive word “therefore.”

When you see “therefore” you should ask yourself what is therefore there for? It is nearly always a word that provides a bridge into a summary or conclusion of what has been stated prior to that. Therefore, serves that purpose in 1 Peter 1:13.

We are encouraged to stay focused, preparing ourselves mentally and emotionally to take action. What action does Peter have in mind? Note verse 14: “do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance.” Instead of falling into sin whether from past habits or new temptations, we are to be holy in all our behavior (v15). True faith leads inexorably to holy living. Holy living is a result of throwing off the former lusts that plagued us starting in our mind.

The Apostle Paul made the same point in his letter to the believers residing in Rome. He wrote to them saying:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.[\[3\]](#)

Rejoicing comes in large measure to believers when they are increasingly triumphant over their old sin nature. Someone has rightly observed that faith in Christ delivers from the penalty of sin, walking with Christ delivers us from the power of sin, and our resurrection into the glory of the Father and the Son delivers us from the presence of sin.

Recognizing the promises of God, the power that the Holy Spirit provides through obedience to the Word of God, and the refining processes of testing, result in a new mind transformed in its thinking which leads to righteous and holy behavior.

Peter was informing his readers then and us today that persecution by unbelievers is expected and indeed, normal. The world views the Christian faith and especially the Gospel that Jesus Christ, the Son of God died on behalf of mankind to be utter nonsense.[\[4\]](#)

What is often not pointed out to those who ridicule, mock, scorn, and persecute Christians is that those who engage in these behaviors are proving that they are among those who are perishing in a biblical and spiritual sense. Unbelievers exhibit a mind that remains darkened and separated from the Light that has come into the world, and does not and indeed cannot comprehend what they foolishly reject.[\[5\]](#)

The faith of true Christians does not rest on the so-called wisdom of this world.[\[6\]](#) Instead, the joy of the Christian is founded upon the rock which is Jesus Christ and a faith that is rooted in the power of God.[\[7\]](#)

A great reminder of the importance of rejoicing in our great God and in our Savior Jesus Christ is found in the Apostle Paul's letter to the believers living in Philippi. To them he wrote these encouraging words:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.[\[8\]](#)

By the power of the Holy Spirit living in you, rejoice today and every day knowing that your faith is not in vain. The Lord will reward those who faithfully follow Him. Do not let your current circumstances rob you of your God-given joy. Rejoice in what you know is true, the Lord Jesus Christ and His return in glory.

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Footnotes:

[\[1\]](#) All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible, Lockman Foundation, 1995.

[\[2\]](#) Hebrews 11:1-2.

[\[3\]](#) Romans 12:1-2.

[\[4\]](#) 1 Corinthians 1:18.

[\[5\]](#) John 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:14.

[\[6\]](#) 1 Corinthians 2:5.

[\[7\]](#) 1 Corinthians 3:11.

[\[8\]](#) Philippians 4:4-8.