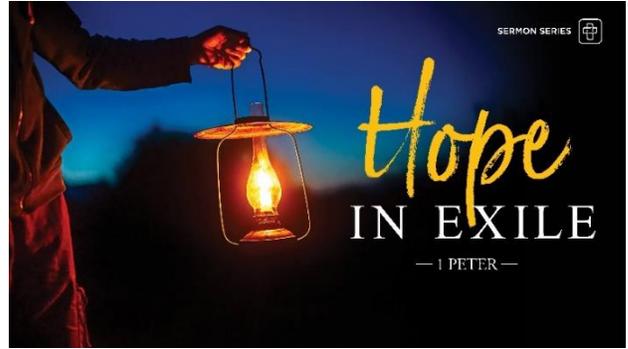




**New Covenant**  
BIBLE CHURCH



## **Inexpressible & Glorious Joy**

### **1 Peter 1:6-9**

**David Sunday    May 3, 2020**

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*<sup>6</sup> You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials <sup>7</sup> so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Notice how this passage is enveloped in joy. It begins in verse six with the words, “*You rejoice in this...*” Then later, in verse eight says, “*...you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy.*” The note of joy dominates the whole passage. The word used for joy is special. This is a word you won’t find in secular Greek literature. It’s a word that’s unique to the vocabulary of the gospel and is only found in the dictionary of grace. It speaks of a deep spiritual joy, a rejoicing in Who God is and what God has done. It’s the word the Virgin Mary uses in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) when she says, “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*” It’s the word used in Acts 16:34 (ESV) where the Philippian jailer says, “*...rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.*”

Inexpressible and glorious joy is one of the most distinguishing marks of a true believer. It’s a kind of joy you have to come to Jesus to get, then once you come to Jesus, you have it. Peter is not commanding us to get joy in this passage. He’s telling Christians we have joy because we have Christ. He speaks of joy in this passage as an indicative, not an imperative. He’s indicating to us something we already have been given in Christ, not imploring us to do something to obtain it.

This passage is here to help us cultivate something we have already been given. This passage is like fertile soil for the cultivation of joy, so that we can experience the growth and flourishing of joy in our lives. So let’s plant our affections here and trust that the Holy Spirit is going to use this passage to stir up the joy we have in Christ. We’re going to make five observations of the attributes of this inexpressible and glorious joy this morning.

## **1. This inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Christ came with the new birth.**

In verse six, when it says, “*You rejoice in this...*,” we have to ask, “What is this?” The answer is: it’s everything Peter told us in 1 Peter 1:3-5. It’s that we who were dead in trespasses and sins have been made alive by the mercy of God the Father through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God mercifully gave us new birth. He caused us to be born again and with that new birth, we who once were without hope and without God in this world have been birthed into a living hope and an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away. That inheritance is being kept in heaven for us and we are being kept by God for it.

This promise is so real, so palpable, so magnificent that we are filled with joy. To be born again is to be delivered from the darkness and deadness of despair into the light and life of everlasting joy in Jesus Christ. Joy came into the world with Jesus, then joy invaded our lives when Jesus came to live in us through the new birth. That’s the first observation.

## **2. This inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Christ remains through the deepest grief.**

The right response to this gift of joy is not to pretend we don’t have real sorrow in this life. Look further at what God’s Word says in verse six: “*You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials.*”

Friends, you will suffer grief in this life. This is speaking of all kinds of sorrows and difficulties, from the mildest irritation to the most intense agony. When we are suffering grief in various trials, this joy we have in Jesus does not deny the grief we’re feeling, nor does the grief we are feeling make the joy disappear. Peter does not say there will be seasons in the Christian life when you will have times of great sorrow and other seasons when you have times of great joy. No, he’s saying you greatly rejoice—present tense—and you are crying out in pain and agony—also present tense. They’re simultaneous. In the Christian life, deep joy is not incompatible with deep sorrow. The Apostle Paul himself, in 2 Corinthians 6:10, describes his inner life like this: “*...sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*” Grieving and rejoicing go hand in hand in the Christian’s experience, because we are living in our salvation while we are still waiting for our final salvation.

We are heirs of an eternal inheritance, but just like the children of Israel had to pass through war and adversity in order to enter into the Promised Land, so do we. We have to go through trials. We have to go through sorrows. We are already in the Kingdom, but the Kingdom is not yet consummated here on earth, so every day in the Christian life we have reasons for gladness and every day in the Christian life we also have reasons for sadness. I like

how Tim Keller put it: “You’re always happier and sadder than you would have been before you were born again.”

Chew on that for a minute. You’re always happier and sadder than you would have been before you were born again. That’s because the new birth enlarges our hearts. It increases our capacity for both joy and for sorrow. We have a living hope, but at the same time we’re living in a fallen world. So every day we live our lives, we can bring our griefs and sorrows to the Lord. We also bear the griefs and sorrows of others. Yet at the same time we have an abiding joy that sustains us through it all.

I think there’s an important application for us in how we care for one another. When another Christian is sorrowful, your goal is not to get them to stop being sorrowful and start rejoicing. Your goal is to come alongside them in their sorrow, listen to them, sympathize with them—weep with those who weep. Then, if they need help to be reminded of the joy they have in Christ, you point them to Him. You remind them that they have an abiding joy in Jesus.

I think this passage also helps us be kind to ourselves. Don’t chide yourself for having grief and sorrow in this life. Don’t pretend it’s not there. That’s inauthentic. Instead, embrace the grief and sorrow, but remember the joy of your salvation in the middle of it too.

Think about what we’re going through right now. We’re going through a time of real loss, as are multitudes of people around the world. We’ve lost the freedom to meet and interact with one another. Someone helpfully observed that this experience we’re going through is actually inherently dehumanizing. What they meant is that it’s cutting us off from something which is vital to human flourishing, which is embodied community. We are made to be in fellowship with others, so it’s understandable that we should find this time difficult. In fact, it’s more than understandable; it’s right. It’s the fitting response. When you’re struggling with the quarantine, you’re not failing. You’re just being human. But we can rejoice too in the midst of this struggle, because in the situation we’re in, God is doing many things in our lives. In fact, one thing He’s doing is providing us with an opportunity in our Western privileged culture to learn how to handle loss well.

So this inexpressible and glorious joy that we have in Christ and in His salvation is durable. It’s an “all weather” kind of joy. It can withstand all kinds of storms.

### **3. This inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Christ expands under testing.**

This is an expansive joy. It actually grows in times of testing. This inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Christ expands under testing.

Now, I can testify to this in my own life. Kate and I have actually experienced this. I never experienced such frequent thoughts of Christ's return, the goodness of the new creation and the hope we have in Christ until Kate got cancer. It's not that I didn't have this hope before that, but cancer activated a joy that was previously dormant, a joy that was sometimes shadowy. It made it vivid and life-giving for me.

How does this happen? How does this joy actually expand under testing? Well, it's because of what the Holy Spirit tells us about our griefs and trials in this passage. First, He says they are for a short time. Did you catch that? Light and momentary in comparison to the eternal weight of glory—that's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4. Here Peter says, "Just a little while" (verse six). Just a little while, then you'll have eternity without trials. Isn't that good news?

Another thing He tells us is they only come "if necessary." That's important. God doesn't waste our trials. He determines when, how and to what extent His people suffer. Don't think that means God is the Author of cancer or coronavirus or death. No, these things came into the world as a result of sin, so creation is groaning because of it.

But remember that this God is good. He entered into this mess. He came into this world of suffering and woe and groaning in the person of Jesus and He has initiated the rescue operation that's going to result in the redemption of the whole created order. So we rejoice that this good God is a God Who is sovereign over our sufferings; that He doesn't introduce suffering into our lives arbitrarily, but only with a purpose.

Our trials are purposeful, Peter tells us in verse seven. He defines God's purpose for our trials beginning with these words: "so that..." He's saying, "I'm going to tell you the purpose now." Your trials might feel senseless to you and you might never know the reasons for them, but you can know that God always has a "so that." One of the deepest purposes for our trials "*so that the proven character of your faith...may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

Gold is one of earth's most precious metals. You can put it through the fire which burns out the dross so that the precious metal that remains is purified. Peter is telling us, "Your faith in Jesus is more precious than gold." He's showing that Jesus is trustworthy, dependable; that Jesus is the rightful recipient of all glory, honor, praise and adoration. That's more valuable than all the gold in the world, which one day is going to perish, but the faith believers have in Jesus will endure forever.

One day, Jesus Christ is going to be revealed to His people and at His return we will see Him face to face. All the world will see His glory and here's what He's going to do. The glory He's had from the beginning with the Father will be bestowed on us, His people, who have

trusted in Him. We are going to receive praise, honor and glory from God—the affirmation of our Father. He is going to rejoice over us with singing—not because we deserve it, but because Jesus took everything we deserved on the cross and now we are going to get everything He deserves when He returns. We’re going to be crowned with glory and honor.

I love how a prayer in The Valley of Vision describes it:

Christ was all anguish, that I might be all joy,  
cast off, that I might be brought in,  
trodden down as an enemy, that I might be welcomed as a friend,  
surrendered to hell’s worst, that I might attain heaven’s best,  
stripped, that I might be clothed,  
wounded, that I might be healed,  
athirst, that I might drink,  
tormented, that I might be comforted,  
made ashamed, that I might inherit glory,  
entered darkness, that I might have eternal light.

My Savior wept, that all tears might be wiped from my eyes,  
groaned, that I might have endless song,  
endured all pain, that I might have unfading health,  
bore a thorned crown, that I might have a glory diadem,  
bowed His head, that I might uplift mine,  
experienced reproach, that I might receive welcome,  
closed His eyes in death, that I might gaze on unclouded brightness,  
expired, that I might live forever.

Here’s the deal. If we are given a crown from Jesus, we’re going to want to take that crown and cast it at His feet, because any glory and honor and praise we receive is just derivative. It’s the glory, honor and praise of Jesus that He is sharing with us, His loved and blood-bought people. Now, because our faith is more precious than gold, God will put our faith through times of testing. We know He is with us in the fire and that comforts us. As the hymn reminds us:

When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie  
My grace all-sufficient will be your supply  
The flames shall not hurt you, I only design  
Your dross to consume and your gold to refine

[From How Firm a Foundation, author unknown]

There’s a dear woman in our church who right now is going through one of life’s severe trials. She’s actually someone who has experienced, more than most of us, some of the deepest agonies and trials human beings can experience in this life. She shared a story with me that has comforted her and I want to share it with you. It’s about a silversmith, not a goldsmith, but I think you’ll get the point.

This silversmith was holding this precious metal in the middle of the fire, where the flames were hottest, so as to burn off all the impurities. Someone was watching him do this and asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time silver was being refined. The silversmith answered yes. He not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the whole time it was in the fire. He needed to make sure he didn't hold it in there a moment too long.

As the woman pondered this, she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy—when I see my image in it."

Friends, if today you are feeling the heat of the fire, rejoice that God has His eye on you and will keep watching you until He sees the image of Jesus fully formed in you. Then when Jesus Christ is revealed, He will crown you with glory, honor and praise. The same glory, honor and praise His Son has enjoyed from all eternity you will then share. Someone put it like this:

In order to count it all joy in the midst of our testings, we need to recognize our suffering for what it is. It is not ultimately a thief who steals our best years, nor a murderer who kills our dearest dreams, nor a madman who wields his weapons at random. Our suffering is rather a servant from God sent to make us steadfast.

Isn't that good? Because we know this, our joy actually expands under testing. That's due to the fact that our joy is found in a Person.

#### **4. This inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Christ is found in a Person.**

I love verse eight: *"Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy."*

This is Peter writing and he had seen Jesus. He had seen Him walking the dusty streets of Galilee and fishing in that sea. He had seen Him transfigured on the mountain, suffering under Pontius Pilate, risen from the dead, then looking into his eyes with tender forgiveness and restoring him to his ministry. "Peter, do you love Me? Feed My sheep" (John 21:15-19). Peter is feeding us, Christ's sheep, even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Peter had seen Jesus face to face, but he's writing to these believers in Asia Minor—way off in Turkey—who haven't seen Jesus like Peter did. Here's the good news. Though we haven't seen Jesus physically, like Peter did, we can still love Him dearly, like Peter loved. That's because the Spirit of God shines the glory of Christ into our hearts, so that we gain a spiritual sight of an unseen Savior. That's why it's called glorious, or more literally, glorified joy. It's the joy of the glorified Christ beaming into our hearts through the Spirit.

Now, it's impossible to love someone you've never known. If I say, "I love Kate" and someone asks, "Well, what do you love about her?" and I say, "Well, I don't know. I've never actually even met her," then my profession of love is meaningless. But believers, we can describe why we love Jesus. Even though we haven't seen Him face to face, the Spirit of God has introduced us to Him and has revealed Him to us. He has opened the eyes of our hearts to discern the glory of Jesus Christ.

We have a personal knowledge of Jesus that grows deeper, more tender, more intimate and more intense the longer we gaze on what the Spirit has revealed about Jesus in the Scriptures. We come to know Jesus by the Spirit through the Scriptures more dearly than we know our dearest friend on earth. We really do. We long to see Him face to face, but the physical distance doesn't stop us from loving Him with an unashamed and extravagant affection.

And in loving Him, we also believe in Him. We believe in Him—a Savior we cannot see. And believing in Him means we yield to Him, entrusting ourselves to Him, relying on Him, depending on Him moment by moment. We turn to Him at all times for strength, encouragement and hope.

If you're like me, sometimes you find yourself walking along the way and you just start saying His name, "Jesus. Jesus." As John Newton put it, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in the believer's ear. It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds and drives away his fears." Our inexpressible and glorious joy is Jesus Himself. Jesus, our priceless treasure. Jesus, our source of purest pleasure. Jesus, the dearest friend to me. He's my inexpressible and glorious joy.

So if you're listening to this today and you know nothing of this joy, it's because this is a joy you have to go to Jesus to get. I want to commend Jesus to you this morning. I want to say to you there is no one more loving or more lovely than He is. There is no one more trustworthy or more dependable than Jesus. You can tell Him your deepest secrets. You can reveal to Him your deepest shame. You can confide in Him your worst fears. You can share with Him your greatest longings. You can entrust all of this to Him. You can stake your everlasting hope on Jesus and He will never let you down.

## **5. This inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Christ will not be disappointed.**

That brings us to the fifth observation about this inexpressible and glorious joy we have in Jesus—it will not be disappointed. That's because of verse nine: "*...because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*"

Here's what this means. As you love and believe in Jesus, even through the deepest griefs and the most fiery trials of this life, God is strengthening your faith. He is maturing your faith. He is perfecting His purpose of salvation in you and preparing you for the day when your salvation will be final and complete in the future, when you will finally be saved to sin no more; when you will finally live in a resurrection body in a new creation where Jesus is the center of it all.

Now, some people are afraid to rejoice in anything because they've been let down so many times. It's kind of a defense mechanism to keep them from being disappointed. But God's Word is assuring us here that the great salvation in which we rejoice today will reach its grand consummation when Jesus is revealed. And the joy we have in Jesus will never be diminished and will never be disappointed.

The Bible puts it like this in Isaiah 51:11: *"Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy will be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* We also read in Psalm 34:5, *"Those who look to him are radiant with joy; their faces will never be ashamed."*

As Dennis Freidel said in our noon prayer meeting on Friday, "Re-joyce." What he meant is if you have Jesus, you have an inexpressible and glorious joy. So renew that joy again and again, day by day, by recalling all Jesus means to you—and more importantly, all you mean to Him. He loves you.

If you don't have Jesus, He's making Himself known to you today. He's inviting you—He's beckoning you—into everlasting joy. Say to Him, "Yes, Jesus. I respond to You today. Create in me a clean and a new heart. Grant me the joy of Your salvation out of my sin and despair. Come and live in me by Your Spirit, leading me into a new life of obedience and joy in You. Amen."

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