

VIII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“Praising God for Our Salvation Trials, Part 2”
I Peter 1:3–12
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We are in this doxology found in I Peter. There are three stanzas to this doxology. This is God’s Word, and God’s Word is the truth. I Peter 1:3–5 says [3] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever, by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The word paradox is a word easily understood but not totally embraced or understood particularly in the area of the Christian life. Paradox is a word we use to describe something we identify as two seemingly contradictory truths but have a resolution either beyond the information we have or beyond the ability we have to process the information. Let me illustrate this.

Let’s say we are in a room and hanging down from the ceiling are two ropes. I go over to one rope and I pull it and as I do that the other rope goes up. Then I go over to the rope that just went up and pull it down and now the other rope goes up. Seemingly I have two ropes but when I pull on one of them and the other goes up then that tells me I have one rope. Because of the ceiling I can’t see that I have one rope for it’s beyond my sight or I have two ropes that are tied together beyond my sight, but there is a resolution to what seems to be a contradiction. How can two ropes affect each other? They can by virtue of the way they are woven or by virtue of being tied together but it’s beyond the information that I have due to the fact it is in the ceiling above me.

The Christian life is full of that. I’m going to introduce you to another paradox, one that is very important in the Christian life. The Christian life is full of paradoxes. Why? It is because the Christian life is a work of the great and glorious God of glory who is infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, beyond us and you can’t wrap yourself around who He is and what He does exhaustively. You can know Him and what He does accurately and intimately but never exhaustively. That’s why Paul every once in a while in his writing will stop and say (paraphrasing) ‘God, You’re too much, I can’t wrap You up in my mind.’

We see this in the doctrine of God. How many Gods do we serve? We serve one God who dwells in three Persons. It is not three Gods but one God. It is not one God in three different uniforms. It seems as though it should be one God or three Gods but God is one God in three Persons. So we declare who He is and what He is not but that is seemingly a contradiction that is only resolved in who God is.

Secondly, God is sovereign and man is morally responsible. God has declared the end from the beginning and has ordained our ways yet we’re not robots. We are free moral agents. Normally we would think if we were a free moral agent then God can only do what I allow Him

to do yet God is sovereign and I am doing what He allows me to do yet I'm doing what I'm doing and I am a free moral agent.

The Bible says in the Christian life we are to rest in Jesus and we are to work for Jesus so which is it – rest or work? The answer is both. Matthew 11:28–29a says *[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29a] Take my yoke upon you...* Philippians 2:12b–13 says *[12b] work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* So to us what seemingly are contradictions actually have their resolution in God and if we're in God and God is in us then that is how they are resolved in our life.

Here is another one for you. When we have trials, Christians need them with escalating joy, and not just trials but when we have grievous, oppressive, soul-crushing trials, believers meet them with elevated, escalating joy – joy in trials, trials for joy. Seemingly how can you have a grievous trial and meet it with joy? It wouldn't be grievous if it had joy, would it? So if it's a grievous trial how can you have joy and if you have joy how can you have a grievous trial? They seem to be contradictory, a paradox. So how are we to understand what He is saying to us?

That is where we are in our text. This is Peter's epistle to us, inspired by the Holy Spirit and he is writing to believers who are under persecution. He is telling them not to be surprised at the fiery ordeal. The first thing he does to prepare them for what they are facing is to write a doxology, a one sentence with 177 words from I Peter 1:3–12. It is intricately nuanced together around the doctrine of the Trinity. This doxology has three stanzas and we have already covered stanza one which is what I read at the beginning of this study (I Peter 1:3–5). In the first stanza we are praising God for the blessing of our salvation inheritance. God in eternity past choose to have mercy on us. In the present He caused us to be born again unto a living Hope through the Savior who died for us and who rose again.

This God says He has an inheritance He is going to give us and He is keeping for us in heaven. It is not like any inheritance we have. Every inheritance in this age on this earth always is corrupted, fades, diminishes, can be stolen, ruined but not the one God is keeping for us. His inheritance is undefiled, imperishable and unfading. He has even better news – He is keeping us for the inheritance He is keeping for us. He is guarding and keeping us through faith. Ephesians 2:8–9 says *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* He is keeping us through the faith He gave us and He is strengthening us through that faith.

That brings us to the second stanza where He causes us to praise Him for the blessing of salvation trials. Those trials are His instruments. Here is the second stanza.

I Peter 1:6–9 says *[6] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, [9] obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

What does Peter mean when he says 'In this you rejoice...' (vs 6)? It is in this fact from eternity past I had mercy on you. In time He caused us to be born again to a living Hope and that living Hope is found through the living Savior who died for your sins and rose again. That living Hope is bringing you to a Divine inheritance that is kept for you and now I am keeping you for

‘in this you rejoice...’ This is also in the present tense so you presently now and keep on rejoicing.

Before we dive deeper in this passage I want to say a few general things about this passage. The Greek is not like our language. Most of the time we just have one word to express something therefore we rely on tone. My favorite illustration of this is in the Greek there are six words for love – a family love (*storgē*), a brotherly love (*philia*), an erotic love (*éros*) for marriage, the love of God for His children (*agápe*) etc. but the English language just has one word and that’s just love. So we have to rely on tone when we use the word love towards our spouse or towards a family member or friend, yet in the original Greek it really helps us here to know which kind of rejoice is used here.

The word translated for ‘rejoice’ most of the time in the Bible is ‘exceedingly joyful’ or ‘exceedingly glad’ but this one here is different. A good reference verse for the way ‘rejoice’ is normally used and the way it is used here in I Peter 1:6 is in Matthew 5:10–12 which says [10] “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* [11] “*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* [12] **Rejoice and be glad**, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Verse 12 gives us the normal use of rejoice and the ‘be glad’ part gives us the way it is used in I Peter 1:6. In I Peter 1:6 He is calling His people to be exceedingly glad when grievous trials come. This is escalating, elevating, enhanced joy which is the result of their encountering these trials.

He does the same thing with the word grieve. There are a couple of words for grieve, suffering and pain. There is one word that is general used most of the time and it is all encompassing all kinds of grief – physical, spiritual and soul grief. The grief Peter is talking about here is not the physical grief. It is the one used in Ephesians 4:30 which says [30] *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* The Holy Spirit doesn’t have a body so this grief is not looking at external, physical pain, for this is looking at internal, soul crushing pain and it’s translated ‘grievous trials.’ This is what the mother of Jesus was pointed to by Simeon when he said to her in Luke 2:35, [35] *and a sword will pierce through your own soul also...*

There are businesses that we have devoted ourselves to that fall apart. There are relationships that are broken. There are anticipated relationships that end. There are hopes, dreams and deaths of loved ones. I meet it all the time as a pastor when the stupidity of sin causes men and women to walk away from a marriage and children. It is soul crushing to those who are affected by it. It is that kind of trial that it is talking about. The Bible is not backing off here for it is taking on the big stuff that happens in a broken world. These grievous trials that seem to be contradictory are met with escalating joy in the lives of My people, how and why does that happen.

Did you notice in the text how Peter separated himself from us in the text? He started off by saying ‘Blessed be *our* Lord and Savior...’ and then said toward the end ‘though *you* have not seen Him *you* love Him...’ Peter had seen Him in life and ministry and after the grave. So now he is pointing directly to you – Christians in Turkey that have been in this church for three decades since the resurrection of Christ. Now Peter is writing to them from Rome telling them to continue to meet those trials with escalating joy. There are some things he tells us about these grievous trials and I want to give you five things about these trials.

The first thing about grievous trials is they are real and now. We are not talking about psychosomatic discomfort or imaginary trials. These are real trials that we encounter now in life.

The second thing about these grievous trials is that they are temporary. They belong to this age and not to the age to come. They are being used in this age to keep you in the age to come. They are being used in this age to let you know who is being kept for the age to come and how they respond by the grace of God to the glory of God in the power of God.

Thirdly, these grievous trials are necessary. They are not accidental or arbitrary but necessary. So if a trial is necessary in my life, who was it who determined it was necessary? If it was up to me I wouldn't have any so it wasn't me. I Peter 1:6 says *...if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials...* Most of us who have phones probably text. Have you ever gotten a Divine text that says 'I've been wondering if you're ready for any trials?' or 'Would you like to have some trials and if so what kind would you like to have?' It doesn't happen this way, does it? Satan attacks and the world attacks, but there is a sovereign God in this broken world who is superintending everything, and that's why Joseph said 'What you intended for harm, God meant for good' (Genesis 50:20).

There was a couple in the previous church I pastored that had come from a different denominational background and they had a hard time processing through the sovereignty of God every time I preached on it but they were a dear couple. We had ongoing conversations and in their home they had an unbelievable trial and just thinking about it makes my heart break because we walked through it with them. Their 11 year old son had an inoperable brain tumor. This young man's testimony was so powerful of his trust in Jesus all the way to glory. I remember him struggling in that bed and his mother just wraps him up and says 'it's okay son, go meet Jesus.' Three minutes later he did.

I also remember a chaplain who stopped by this boy's room. I'm sure he was well meaning. He put his hand on the mother and said 'I want to encourage you and you know that God is not involved in this.' Isn't it amazing how we think we have to get God off the hook? She was a very pointed lady in her conversations and she said to him, 'Are you kidding me? If you think that comforts me then you are thinking wrong. Do you mean I have a God where something is out of His control or can't respond to this or watching this stuff as if He is helpless? As I read the Bible (she looked at me) I've got a God who is using this and who is sovereign in it, through it and over it. That's my only Hope. This is not some arbitrary accidental moment beyond a sovereign God's direction.' This is God working in my life. He never tells me the trial is going to be joyful for it's grievous but He does tell me I can meet it with escalating joy.

Fourthly, our grievous trials are manifold/multiple. They are physical trials, medical trials, economical trials, aspirational trials, terminal trials financial trials. Lately my wife and I have been trying to figure out what to do with our yard. I love ivy so I said to her as we were looking at various plants 'I want that kind of ivy.' She said 'Oh variegated' and I said 'what's that?' She said 'That means there are various colors to it.' Trials are variegated. They come into our life from all kinds of direction in our life. So the trials are multiple, manifold and multi-faceted.

The fifth one is that trials are purposed in our life. Paul, Peter, John, Jesus and all of them keep putting this "paradox" in front of us. Jesus says in John 16:33, *[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* Romans 5:3–5 says *[3] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character,*

and character produces hope, [5] 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. Our Hope does not disappoint and I would have never known how glorious He is if He hadn't taken me through the trial.

I beg you not to buy the books and mess that go with this prosperity gospel where they tell you when you have this sickness, this trial, this or that you have it because you simply didn't believe. The reason we have those things in our life is not because we didn't believe enough but it's because God is helping our faith grow stronger. I know all the stuff that goes with this prosperity gospel is appealing but it is antithetical to the Gospel. Paul says in Philippians 1:29–30, [29] *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, [30] engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.* In His suffering He is filling up the cup for His glory and that is what He says to us.

While I don't think any of us are to pray for suffering or trials we also don't recoil from them but we fix our eyes on Jesus. James 1:2–4 says [2] *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* All the writers of Scripture are constantly communicating this to us.

There is purpose and Peter says there are two purposes but before I get to the purposes I want to remind you of what he says about joy. Our joy is real now and it will be real then when we go to be with the Lord. Our joy is escalating now and will escalate then at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our joy is inexpressible now. We express it now but can't give full vent to it and can you imagine how we will be expressing it then when we are praising Him at the day of Christ. Our joy is God exalting now and it will be God exalting then to His praise, glory and honor. Our joy is by faith now but not then. At the revelation of Jesus it will be by sight and we shall behold Him.

I have an illustration to give here from my 8th grade Algebra teacher and tests she gave. I sometimes think this teacher stayed up to see how much pain she could cause me with her test, not really, but why do teachers give tests? There are three reasons. A test shows you what you know, what you don't know and what you need to know. These are the same reasons God uses tests in our lives.

Peter builds on what James, John and Paul have done and Peter gives us an immediate purpose of tests plus an ultimate purpose of tests. The immediate purpose of the test is to test the genuineness of your faith. You do know that not everyone who says they believe in Jesus really do? In the Bible we see this in Simon the magician and those whose seed fell on rocky and thorny soil. Not everyone who claims faith has saving faith. James doesn't say your works save you but he says faith without works is dead, meaning a faith that doesn't express itself in a changed life is no faith. That is why Paul says to examine yourself to see that you are of the faith. God's examination tool that reveals who are believers are tests. Just like you put fire to gold, a test of our faith in the trials of life shows, develops and strengthens our faith. Why? It is because we are being kept through faith.

He also shows us who we can learn from because of their faith and that is one of the reasons I love pastoring this congregation. I'm grateful I don't have a homogenous church where it's full of millennials or full of old people but there is this wonderful diversity and I pray for more diversity. I love to hear the tests and trials our international students have been through as they have come to Christ, own Christ and love Christ from unbelievable backgrounds that they

have faced and when they came here and heard about Christ. I'm so glad to have that international ministry. I love to sit down with the families of our special needs children and talk with the parents that have walked through those trials and have seen the grace of God and what He is doing. I love to talk with the special needs kids as they inform me of this work of God's grace that He is doing in their life that I'll never know but I can learn from them.

I love to talk with my African American brothers and find out what it is like to have grown up in a situation where an original sin was chattel slavery and then how they have been able to grow in grace and unite with God's people in one heart, one life and one ministry. I love to talk with older people and join them up with younger people who are going through the same thing they have already been through and see how they help that young person. It's amazing what you'll learn as they were tested and the strength and genuineness of their faith was there. I love to see these younger people who are facing an unbelievable culture who would marginalize them and ridicule them but they will say 'Jesus is Lord.' I love to see that multi-faceted test with those multi-faceted dynamics of all that is going on as our faith is strengthened.

Our faith is more valuable than the most valuable thing in this world which is gold. Mark 8:36 says [36] *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* If I could offer you the title right to all the gold in the world or a growing faith in Jesus Christ which would you choose? Peter says more valuable than anything (than gold) is a genuine faith in Christ.

Then there is an ultimate purpose which is when Jesus comes at His revelation what God did to us and through us in our trials will renown on that Day with praise, glory and honor to Him. In other words, our trials are giving us worship assets and resources for glory. They are not only strengthening our faith and making evident the genuineness of our faith now but our trials are giving us worship material for glory.

So here is the takeaway for this study. The Christian life in this age is continually marked by the seemingly incompatible yet beneficially concurrent dynamic of grievous trials informed by escalating joy. There will not come a day that you won't deal with this "paradox." Realize that when you get older it will probably get harder because you have to turn the dross up to get more out of the gold for once you've burned it out one time it has to be hotter the second time around. That's your life now and you might be thinking I didn't sign up for this but you did. Jesus told us to count the cost and take up our cross daily. Our life here is not the way of the crown but our life here is the way of the cross on the way to the crown. That is how we win the world – we take up our cross and follow Him.

So our life will continually be marked in this world. God loves you so much that He turns the heat up to burn the dross out and to reveal the genuine faith. He turns the heat on to tune you up to turn you to Him. As these grievous trials are informed by escalating joy it is exciting to see it. I want to leave you with an example of this.

Remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? A trial came for them and I don't remember them asking for one and telling God to give them a certain kind of trial, like a fiery furnace. Basically King Nebuchadnezzar told them they could do their own worship stuff but they still had to bow down to him and the golden image that was built like he was making the rest of the people in the land do. They said 'We respect you king and we're good citizen but we are not going to bow down to you or the golden image.'

Daniel 3:13a, 15b–22 says [13] *Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage... [15b] But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"*

[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. [17] If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

*[19] Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with **fury**, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. [20] And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. [21] Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. [22] Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.*

Have you ever noticed how stupid sin is? If you are mad at somebody and you wanted to see them suffer would you not have turned the fire down to let them suffer as they slowly burned to death? He turned it up so hot that he killed a couple of his soldiers in hopes to see the three of them suffer more. That is how stupid sin is. Then later on he gets to thinking about what he did and goes to see what happened to them in the furnace and they are still there – in the trial, in the furnace and God is taking them through it. God is not only taking them through it but He is in there will them. As Nebuchadnezzar looks into the furnace he says in Daniel 3:25, *[25] “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”* Nebuchadnezzar had seen these fake gods with these fake religions that supposedly blew out fires now met the God of glory who goes into the fire with His people.

That’s how we escalate joy – not out here in the mitigating circumstances but by fixing our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:1–2 says *[1] Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the **joy** that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* Our Savior endured the fiery trial of hell on the cross, a trial that we could not endure by His mercy and grace, for the joy of fulfilling the Father’s will and bringing us to glory. Now we who are saved, face the trials and God’s grace endures us and strengthens us with our eyes fixed on Jesus and with the joy of Christ escalating in our soul. He is keeping you for glory. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, come speak to our hearts. There may be those reading this today whom You have moved to seek so may they hear that there is a Savior who went to a trial that they do not want to go to and He endured the fire of hell that we might have everlasting life. He grants us faith in Him and then He uses the trials of this age to strengthen our faith, reveal its genuineness and bringing assurance to our souls. We are not only resident aliens but we are kept by Jesus as we are being strengthened, perfected and marked out, not by the absence of trials but by the presence of Jesus in our trials and the declaration of our joy in Jesus. Nothing can separate us – famine, nakedness, peril or sword – from our Jesus who loves us, is with us and will be with us until that Day where we no longer live by faith, but the One whom we’ve not seen and now love, will be the One we love as we behold Him for I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN OVERVIEW OF THE DOXOLOGY OF SALVATION INHERITANCE

STANZA ONE – (vv. 3–5)

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Inheritance

STANZA TWO – (vv. 6–9)

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Trials

STANZA THREE – (vv. 10–12)

Praising God for the Blessing of our Salvation Truth

A CLOSER VIEW OF STANZA TWO

GRIEVOUS TRIALS

1. Our Trials are real and now
2. Our Trials are temporary
3. Our Trials are necessary
4. Our Trials are manifold
5. Our Trials are purposed

ESCALATING JOY

1. Our joy is real now and then
2. Our joy is escalating now and then
3. Our joy is by faith now but not then
4. Our joy is inexpressible now and then
5. Our joy is God-exalting now and then

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Christian life in this age is continually marked by the seemingly incompatible yet beneficially concurrent dynamics of grievous trials informed by escalating joy.