

## 2. Learning to Rejoice in Testing

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn about the future inheritance that each Christian has been promised. We also saw that we want to help our children realize the importance of being ready for the coming of the Lord at all times because we do not know when Christ will come to take us to that inheritance. However, at the same time, we also want to prepare our children to live for the Lord as we wait for that coming. One thing that is very important is to show them how by our example and help them to learn to rejoice in testing.

1 Peter 1:6-9 says, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.” The fact that we have an eternal inheritance means that every Christian can rejoice as we look to the future. However, we are not yet enjoying that inheritance. In fact, we may even be going through a time of difficult testing. That was true for the people to whom Peter originally wrote this letter. As a result, the things that Peter wrote to them can help us and our children learn how to rejoice even when we are going through a time of testing.

Peter understood that the Christians in his day were rejoicing greatly even though they were grieved by the trials that they were going through at the time. The word that is translated “greatly rejoice” means “*to be exceedingly glad*”. This same word is used in 1 Peter 4:13 where we read, “But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” Here, the word is translated “with exceeding joy.” This teaches us an important lesson. We can have great joy even in difficult times as we remember our eternal inheritance.

We see that it is possible to rejoice greatly even during the times when we are grieved by various trials. That is due to the fact that joy is based on what the Lord is doing in our lives and not the things that are happening around us. Peter first reminded the Christians that the trials that they were experiencing would only be for a little while. Peter also recognized that they had been grieved by these trials. The word that is translated “grieved” means “*to make sorrowful*”. The word that is translated “trials” was used by James in James 1:2-3 where we read, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” Both Peter and James understood that the Lord allows testing and even great sorrow to develop patience in our lives.

We see that the reason the Lord allows such trials in our lives is due to the fact that the Lord wants to show the genuineness of our faith. Fire is used to purify gold because fire burns out the tiny specks of dust that are in that gold and makes the gold pure. Here, we see that trials in the life of a Christian are much more valuable than the gold that is tested by fire because our trials demonstrate that our faith is genuine. The revelation of Jesus Christ refers to the coming of Christ for the church. At the time that Christ comes for us, the genuineness of our faith will be recognized.

That is why we eagerly look forward with love to the time when we will see Christ. At that time, our genuine faith will bring praise, honor and glory to Christ for all eternity.

Because we are looking forward to the coming of Christ, we can rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and full of glory even though we do not yet see Christ. This is due to the fact that we have believed even though we have not yet seen Christ. At the time that Christ comes, we will receive the full reward of our faith. We have received salvation by faith. However, at the coming of Christ, we will receive the fullness of that salvation. Romans 8:23 says, “Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Here, we see that we received the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation as the down payment. At the coming of Christ, we will receive our eternal body.

Peter goes on to describe our salvation in more detail in the following verses. 1 Peter 1:10-12 says, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.” Here, we see that the Old Testament prophets wanted to clearly understand how this salvation would be provided.

We see that the prophets inquired and searched carefully. In Acts 15, James was quoting from Amos at the Jerusalem Council. Acts 15:15-17 says, “‘And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: “After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.’”” The prophets knew the Gentiles would receive salvation but they did not fully understand how that salvation would be provided even though they made careful inquiry. They had to accept the fact that God would provide salvation by faith. That is why Hebrews 11:39-40 says, “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

Although the prophets did not fully understand, they prophesied of the grace that would come to the Gentiles. Here, we see that the Old Testament prophets were obedient to the Lord and prophesied the things that the Lord told them to speak even when they did not understand what they were saying. The Old Testament prophets wanted to know who they were talking about and when that person would come. We also see how the Lord led them to prophesy what they spoke and wrote. We see that their message was given to them through the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” Here, we see that they spoke those words because they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit spoke to the prophets and predicted to them in advance so that they wrote about the sufferings of Christ. Passages like Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and many others tell us many things about the sufferings of Christ. Isaiah 53:3-5 says, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” However, we see here that the writers who wrote those prophecies wondered who they were talking about and when those things would happen. The same was true when they wrote about the resurrection and the other glories that would follow.

In fact, God revealed to the prophets that the things which they were writing were not for them or the people living during the time that they were on earth. That is why certain parts of the Old Testament could not be understood until after the death and resurrection of Christ. Here, we are reminded of the greatness of the wisdom of God. That is why Christ said to the disciples after the resurrection in Luke 24:44-45, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Even though the disciples walked with Christ for more than three years, they could not even understand until after the resurrection.

Earlier that same day, Christ had appeared to two of His followers as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Luke 24:25-27 says, “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Here, we see that the day of His resurrection Christ helped His followers to understand passages from throughout the Old Testament that explained what had happened in the previous few days. As a result, the followers of Christ had the privilege of explaining Old Testament passages that had never been understood before even by angels.

However, they could not minister in their own strength. They needed the Holy Spirit to give them both understanding and power to preach just as we do. That is why Christ said in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” We want to help our children learn to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that we are able to rejoice even when we are experiencing testing because of the message that the Lord has given us to share. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to rejoice in testing.