

1 Peter 1:6–9

Introduction

Last week, we saw that we have been begotten anew by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. This week, Peter continues:

I. 1 Peter 1:6a — In this you rejoice,

In *this* you rejoice. And my first response to these words is this, “Do I?” What makes Peter so confident that I am rejoicing in these things – in my living hope, and my inheritance, and my salvation ready to be revealed in the last time? Well, did you just listen to that question? How can you truly *have* these things, and at the same time *not* rejoice in them? Can that really even be possible? And yet I think that Peter isn’t just saying how things are for us, I think he’s also (implicitly) exhorting us to **rejoice**. “In this you rejoice” because it’s impossible not to; and yet “in this” you **should always be rejoicing** more and more as you see more and more the living hope, and inheritance, and salvation that is yours. **In *this* you rejoice.** And so, for all of us, our first response to these words should be, “Do I?” And, “Am I?”

What is this rejoicing? There are two main Greek words for “rejoice” or “rejoicing.” The more common and the more versatile one is *chairō*. *Chairō* can be used as a formal greeting and be translated, “Greetings!” (Mat. 26:49; 28:9; 2 Jn. 10-11) *Chairō* can refer to a rejoicing not just in the things of God and His salvation, but also to a rejoicing in wickedness. (cf. Mark 14:11; Jn. 16:20; 1 Cor. 13:6; Rev. 11:10) *Chairō* can refer to a strong and intense and overwhelming joy as well as to a more simple and “generic” just being “happy” about something. (cf. Jn. 11:15)

But this isn’t the word we have here. The word we have here is “*agalliao*” – and it’s a word that’s never, ever used in any secular Greek writing, but *only* in the writings of God’s covenant people.* It’s a word that in the New Testament is never used of rejoicing in anything evil or wicked. It’s a word that’s only used for an intense joy that’s abundant and overflowing. What all this means very simply is that it’s a word that in the New Testament is reserved exclusively for the rejoicing of God’s people **in God**, and **in the things of God**, and **in His great salvation**.†

- John 8:56 (HCSB; cf. NET) — [Jesus said,] Your father Abraham was **overjoyed** [*agalliao*] that he would see My day; he saw it and **rejoiced** [*chairō*].
- Acts 16:34 [NASB; cf. NET; ASV] — [The Philippian jailor] brought [Paul and Silas] into his house and set food before them, and **rejoiced greatly**, having believed in God with his whole household.

* The noun *agalliao* also occurs only in Biblical, apocryphal, and ecclesiastical writings (Luke 1:14, 44; Acts 2:46; Heb. 1:9; Jude 24; cf. Bauer; Grudem).

† This describes even the rejoicing of the Jews in John 5:35 – though their rejoicing was ultimately short-lived. (cf. Carson, PNTC) “Bultmann says, ‘God’s help is always the theme of [*agalliae*] which is a jubilant and thankful exultation’ (TDNT, 1:20).” (Blum)

- Luke 1:46–47 — And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit *rejoices/exults* in God my Savior...”
- Acts 2:25–26 (NASB) — I saw the LORD always in my presence; for he is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart was glad [merry; *euphraino*] and my tongue *exulted*.
- Jude 24 (ESV; cf. NASB; NIV; HCSB; NCV; ASV; NLT; NKJV) — Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with *great joy* [noun; *agalliasis*]...

It seems especially telling to me that the rejoicing of Jesus is also described with this word, *agalliao*; and look especially at how this joy is *empowered* and what He is rejoicing in!

- Luke 10:21 (NIV; cf. NASB; NLT) — At that time Jesus [was] *full of joy through the Holy Spirit*, [and he] said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, *because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children*. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

Now, the more common word for “rejoice” (*chairo*) can also be used for this intense rejoicing of God’s people in the things of God and in His salvation. (cf. John 3:29; Acts 8:39; Phil. 3:1) My only point is that having a word that’s reserved exclusively for this *kind* of joy reminds us that there is a rejoicing that can only be known by the **people** of God and can only be experienced because of the **things** of God. This is a qualitatively different kind of joy and rejoicing because it’s produced by qualitatively different kinds of realities – realities that can only be tasted by those whom God Himself has begotten anew. “**IN THIS you greatly rejoice.**” **IN THIS you rejoice exceedingly.**” In *what*? In our living hope, and our inheritance, and in our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. So we have three places in the New Testament where the “special” word for rejoicing (*agalliao*) is added on to the “normal” word for rejoicing (*chairo*) in order to emphasize all the more the greatness and the **abundance** of the Christian’s joy.

- Matthew 5:12 (NKJV; cf. ASV, NLT) — **Rejoice** and be *exceedingly glad*, for great is your reward in heaven...
- Revelation 19:7 (ESV; cf. NRSV; NET; ASV; YLT) — Let us **rejoice** and *exult* and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.
- 1 Peter 4:13 (NASB; cf. HCSB; YLT) — To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on **rejoicing**, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may **rejoice with exultation** [“so that you may... be glad and shout for joy” (NRSV); so that you may “be glad with exceeding joy” (NKJV; cf. ASV; NRSV)].

OK. But wait a minute. Is it possible that Peter’s going a little bit overboard? Has Peter completely lost touch with the realities of this world, and that we’re still living *here* as foreigners *in this world*?

II. 1 Peter 1:6 — In this you greatly[‡] rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials...

[‡] Cf. NASB; NET; NIV; ASV; NLT; NKJV

Doesn't it seem strange to hear Peter talking, now, about being "grieved"? That word for "grieved" refers to an inward mental or emotional distress and anguish. Peter's point isn't just the external trials that we experience, but the grief and sorrow that's produced by these trials *inside of us*. So, yes, Peter knows full well that this is the reality of our lives in this world. He is *not* "out of touch" with your life, or with mine.

He mentions "various" trials. Or we could say, "all different kinds" of trials. For the first readers of this letter, these trials were all different forms and kinds of persecution. And that's really what Peter has in mind here. (cf. 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:15-17; 4:4, 12-16) He has in mind our being rejected, and mocked and reviled, and disadvantaged, and falsely accused, and in general just wrongly and unjustly treated by the world. But after all these things, we could still think of other kinds of trials that we experience – trials that also cause us inward distress and anguish and grief.[§]

Peter is very honest about the reality that we are *grieved* by "all different kinds of trials," but he doesn't spend any time at all just dwelling on this reality all by itself. In other words, we're not supposed to be living in denial. There's a sense in which we need to embrace the reality of our trials and the fact that these trials do cause us to be anguished and distressed and pained and grieved in this life. We unreservedly recognize the reality of our grief for what it *truly is* – *grief*. But Peter would have us embrace this reality *only in* a certain light, and *only for* a certain end purpose and goal.

Peter says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though *now for a little while*... you have been grieved by various trials..." We just read in verse five that we are being guarded by God's power through faith for a **salvation ready** to be revealed in the last time. Therefore, if we are still being grieved by all different kinds of trials "*now*," this must be only for the "present," and therefore only temporary and only "for a little while." When we're *in the midst* of the trials and griefs of this life, it's so easy for us to succumb to the feeling that these trials and griefs will be forever – that there will never be an end to them. And it's this false belief (even if it's only subconsciously held) that leads to despair. But Peter would have us see all of our griefs—at all times—**only against the backdrop** of our **hope**. **In this way**, the griefs remain griefs—there is no denial here—but it is never, ever forgotten that the griefs are only "*now*" and only "*for a little while*. **In this way**, our grief, instead of causing us to despair, actually makes our hope shine out the brighter and so, in the end, it only increases our rejoicing – even as we really do grieve.

Can you see how difficult it can be for us to maintain this perspective?—This paradoxical reality? And yet as difficult as this may be, it's not at all impossible because this *is* the reality, and it's grounded entirely in the truth. We grieve at our present trials in this life, but it's this grief, paradoxically, that also increases our deep spiritual joy and rejoicing in the things of our salvation.

Remember, Peter would have us embrace the reality of our grief *only within* a certain light and only for a certain end purpose and goal: "In this you greatly rejoice, though **now for a little while, if necessary**, you have been grieved by various trials." As we endure various griefs and distresses, the second thing Peter wants us to *know* is that these griefs are never the result of fate

[§] In the experience of the world, these same trials can never be called "tests of faith" as they are in the life of the Christian. (cf. 1:7)

and never the result of chance or accident **and** never the result of an arbitrary and capricious God!—Rather, they can only, always, be the result of God’s good and loving purposes for us. This doesn’t mean that we don’t call evil, *evil*, or that evil is somehow less evil, but it does mean that even evil, in the end, can *only* serve the good and gracious and loving purposes of God for those whom He Himself has begotten as His sons and daughters. “If necessary” means not that our griefs are necessary simply because God has planned them (though that is true as far as it goes), but rather that God has ordained all our trials and griefs only *because they are necessary FOR US and for the final, awesome salvation that God has ordained and planned FOR US.* (cf. Goppelt) Maybe we could express this with a little different translation: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, *if need be*, you have been grieved by various trials.” (cf. Davids) We don’t like to think that our griefs are *needed*, and yet the message of the Bible is that, in fact, our **griefs are both needed and necessary.** So: We shouldn’t think first of all of God ordaining *our griefs*, but rather of God ordaining *our salvation*, and then *along with that salvation every means that is necessary* to bring us all *to* that final salvation.

And so, once again, we have a very difficult, and a very wonderful paradox. Our grief remains grief, both painful and distressing—there is no denial here—but now we understand, by faith, that these griefs are “necessary” for the *attaining* of our hope. Put simply: If I am grieved by various trials, this is because it is in some way “necessary” for the attaining of my salvation; *therefore*, I am able to see even *in* my trials and griefs the glorious certainty of my salvation. In God’s will, our griefs actually **increase** our deep spiritual joy and rejoicing in the salvation that will *most surely* one day be ours – even as we **really are** anguished, and even as we **really do** grieve. Can you see, once again, how difficult it can be for us to maintain this perspective?— This paradoxical reality? And yet as difficult as it may be, it’s *not* impossible because this *is* our reality, and it’s entirely grounded in the truth.

But why should *griefs* be *necessary* for the attaining of final salvation? Peter answers:

III. 1 Peter 1:7 — ...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.

The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who comes to God must believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. (cf. Heb. 11:6) But what is the “**quality**” or the “**kind**” of faith that truly pleases God and that results in praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ? What is the “quality” or the “kind” of faith that God will find precious in His sight when we stand before Him on the final day of judgment?

Peter answers very clearly: It will only be that faith which is of a **tested and proven** character. (cf. Achtemeier) It will only be that faith which has been refined and purified through testing – much like the gold that has just come out of the fire has also been **proven** to be pure gold and **cleansed** from every impurity. One commentator says: “Through the fire of affliction [and trial] all secondary motives must be separated out of faith.” (Goppelt) “Our trials... burn away our self-confidence” (Clowney) and so it’s our trials that cause *our faith* to lay hold of God with an always greater strength and purity of heart. **This is the quality, or the kind of faith that we are**

assured is precious in God's sight, and so this is the quality/kind of faith that we know God Himself is working to produce in us *through* the refining, purifying, testing process.

Again, are you seeing the apparent paradox and tension between the hope and the joy, and the grief and the pain? And yet ultimately, as we're already beginning to see, this tension is wholly and completely resolved in the infinitely superior and in the infinitely greater hope and joy of our salvation.

Remember that God Himself is the one who is guarding us **through faith for** a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. And so what will be the end result of this refining, purifying, testing process? Peter says that it will be a faith that is found to result in **praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ!** Do you see how the **revelation** of *Jesus Christ* is the **revealing** of our salvation, and how the revealing of our salvation in the last time *is* nothing less than the revelation of Jesus Christ? When Jesus is revealed from heaven, so also will our salvation be revealed!

And what will this salvation mean for us?—Praise, and glory, and honor. But aren't these all things that **belong** by rights **only** to *God*? Think of the scene around the throne of God and of the Lamb in heaven:

- Revelation 5:11–13 — Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “**Worthy** is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and **honor** and **glory** and **blessing!**” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be **blessing** and **honor** and **glory** and might forever and ever!”
- Revelation 7:11–12 — And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! **Blessing** and **glory** and wisdom and **thanksgiving** and **honor** and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

And yet here in 1 Peter, what are we seeing? What are we learning?—That a tested and proven, and a refined and purified faith is so exceedingly precious in God's sight that He will bestow upon that man, or woman, or child of such a faith **His own praise**, and **His own glory**, and **His own honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ^{**} – and in so doing, He Himself will be praised and glorified and honored *in us*! Have we ever before fully understood the infinite worth and value and beauty and preciousness of our faith?—Because faith is really just the wholehearted acknowledgment of the infinite worth and value and beauty and preciousness of Jesus Christ. **IF** a tested and proven and refined and purified faith is so precious in God's sight and so wholly pleasing and acceptable to Him on the Day of Judgment—if this is the *quality* and the *kind* of faith that will be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ—**THEN** shouldn't this same kind of tested and proven faith *also* be more **precious and valuable**

^{**} “Such faith [God] will not forget, but will store up as a jewel of great value and beauty to be displayed and delighted in on the day of judgment.” (Grudem)

to us than all the finest and purest gold in the world – gold that ultimately perishes even though it is tested by fire?

In our day, we have a very dangerous imbalance in our almost exclusive emphasis on salvation as something already past and already accomplished. Salvation isn't *just* a “fact” of the past, but a constantly **working** reality in the present until it's finally fulfilled and accomplished in the future. And so even now, in His infinite and hidden wisdom, God is working in the lives of all His true children whatever is “**necessary**” for their final salvation – even including all of our present trials and griefs. The point is not that our griefs are now joys. Grief is still grief, sin is still sin, evil is still evil – with all of its pain and heartache and distress. But the tested and proven **faith** that our trials and griefs are working to produce in us is cause for an exceeding spiritual joy and rejoicing in the salvation that will one day be ours. God is working in the lives of all those whom He has begotten to guarantee in them that tested genuineness of faith upon which He will one day bestow **His own** praise and glory and honor. And so, in doing this, He Himself will be eternally praised and glorified and honored in us.^{††} (2 Thess. 1:10)

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 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...**”

IV. 1 Peter 1:8–9 — ...*who*, though not having seen Him, you love Him, and though not now seeing him, you believe in him and rejoice greatly^{‡‡} [*agalliao*] with joy [*chairō*] that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And so Peter brings us right back to where we first started. Here's a word (“rejoice greatly” / *agalliao*) that appears only eleven times in the entire New Testament, and yet now we have it for the second time in only three verses. And notice, too, how Peter combines this with so many *other* words and themes that we've already seen – “**glory**,” “**faith**,” “**salvation**.”

How is it that something still future can bring us such exceeding joy in the present? How is it that the revelation of Jesus Christ, which is still entirely future, can cause us such great rejoicing in the present – even in the midst of our real griefs and distress and anguish? The answer is simple, but also profoundly awesome. Though Jesus has not yet been revealed—though we have not seen Him and do not now see Him—nevertheless, **we love Him ALREADY**, and **we trust in Him NOW**. And so in this **loving and trusting Him TODAY** who is our **FUTURE salvation**, we really do come to **taste**, already now, the joy of that future day. **Even today, then—even today, we rejoice greatly with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory**. Even now, as Peter says, we are already “**obtaining**” the ultimate outcome of our **faith**, the salvation of our souls.

^{††} “If ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ is a God of grace, then it is in giving that he receives (cf. the expression, ‘to the praise of the glory of his grace’ in Eph 1:6, 12, 14). In honoring he is honored, in glorifying he receives glory, and in praising he is praised.” (Michaels; cf. Goppelt)

^{‡‡} Cf. NASB; ASV

Now we have to be careful here. Peter's point here is not the Greek idea of the soul *versus* the body. (cf. Mat. 10:28; 3 Jn. 2) What Peter has in mind is the Hebrew idea of the soul as one's **whole person and being** – the soul as one's very **life** (cf. Gen. 2:7; Ps. 3:2; 7:2, 5; 35:3; Mat. 16:25; Rom. 13:1). So what does this mean? It means that the "salvation of [my] soul" is not the release of my soul from some imprisonment in the body. Not at all! The salvation of my soul is rather the salvation of "**all of me.**" It's a whole new creation that includes **both** my **body** and my **soul, ALL OF ME** finally delivered from all outward trials and all inward griefs in a new heavens and a new earth where the outcome of my tested and proven faith will be praise and glory and honor in the presence of Jesus for every day of the rest of my life. (cf. Achtemeier^{§§}) It is the inexpressible, glory-infused joy of **this** future salvation of our souls that we taste even **today** – because we are already loving the one we haven't yet seen, and we are already believing in Him, trusting Him with all our hearts.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, are you greatly rejoicing? Even in the midst of trials and real grief, are you rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory? Have we fully realized the infinite worth and value and beauty and preciousness of a tested and proved, and refined and purified faith? This morning, we have felt the apparent tension between the hope and the joy, and the grief and the pain. And yet we've also seen that tension wholly and completely resolved in the **infinitely superior** and the **infinitely greater** hope and joy of our salvation.

"In this [HOPE] **YOU GREATLY REJOICE**,

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you have been grieved by various trials,

so that the tested genuineness of your faith

—**more precious** than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—
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who,

though not having seen Him, **you love Him**,
and though not now seeing him, **you believe in him**
and **[YOU] REJOICE GREATLY** with joy that is inexpressible and filled with
glory,
obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

^{§§} See also Michaels