

Joy and Suffering - Part 2 **I Peter 1:6-9**

INTRODUCTION:

As we begin this morning, I would like for you to open your Bibles to Acts 16. I know, some of you are confused right now because you already have your Bibles open to I Peter, but I would like for you to put your fingers in I Peter and turn with me to Acts. Before we read our opening scripture, I would like to read about the events that occur in Acts 16.

Acts 16:19-24 (NASB)

¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, ²⁰ and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, ²¹ and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

²² The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. ²³ When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; ²⁴ and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Let's just stop for a minute and review what the situation is here. Paul and Silas have been seized by basically a mob, dragged to the authorities, and falsely accused. The authorities, taking this false accusation, stripped them naked and beat them with rods.

I didn't spend a lot of time reading about the customary Roman practice of "beating with rods", but let's assume for a moment, that the beatings hurt a lot! It was a real serious painful beating. It left bruises and it was going to hurt for quite a while. Then they were cast into a prison cell and had their feet fastened in stocks.

Again, I don't know exactly what was entailed, but we can assume that it was an unpleasant place. The fact that they were bruised, sore, and possibly bleeding was not taken into consideration. They were placed on a hard dirty floor and their feet were locked up into stocks.

How did Paul and Silas respond. Let's look at verse 25.

Acts 16:25 (NASB)

²⁵ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God,

Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God! They break out in **PRAISE!** They are **SINGING** hymns to God. They are **PRAISING** His name!

Their hearts are overflowing with **JOY** and they are **CELEBRATING** THEIR GREAT GOD!

I WANT what Paul and Silas had!!!

I want to be happy. But, I want to be more than **JUST** happy. I want a Godly happiness that should I be falsely accused, beaten with rods, and thrown into prison, then joy would overflow out of my heart and I would **PRAISE** my GREAT GOD!

This morning, I would like to reveal from God's Word not only **HOW** we can have that joy, but also the fact that, as a true follower of Christ, we **WILL** be able to maintain that joy throughout our life here on earth.

As we read from our opening scripture this morning in I Peter, God's Word tells us **HOW** we can **HAVE** what Paul and Silas had!

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 1:6-9 (NASB)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Prayer

Many times we read of truths in the Bible that contradict our earthly understanding. This message is one of those cases. It is a lesson on how we **will** have joy in our lives despite the suffering or negative circumstances that we face if we have a true relationship with Christ.

Last week we focused on the reality of suffering (the glass half empty). This week we will focus on joy (the glass half full). This is so foreign to our way of thinking. How can we have happiness when so many things in our life seems to be going wrong?

BODY:

I. What is Joy?

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

This passage seems to contradict our understanding of happiness and difficulties in our life. How is it possible that we can encounter problems in our life such as bad health, financial problems, or even death of loved ones and still have a spiritual happiness?

It is so foreign to our way of thinking! It appears to be a paradox like trying to mix oil and water. How can we have joy in our lives when everything seems to be going wrong?

Last week we talked about the "Reality of Our Suffering".

Our suffering is real. The reality is that we do face intense trials, grieving, and suffering in our life. It is a **REAL BURNING PAIN** both mentally and physically!

We will face trials and we will grieve. And that is OK! The key to our suffering is to acknowledge that God is in control.

Peter tells us that it is "necessary" at times that we be " **distressed by various trials**".

But notice that even though they were " **distressed by various trials**" they still " **greatly rejoiced**". Also verse 8 tells us " **you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory**".

Paul tells us that these believers grieved due to circumstances they faced yet they continued to rejoice! **To be joyous means to have a joy in life that runs deeper than pain or suffering.** These believers had a joy in life that occurred despite their circumstances.

We need to ask the question then, "**How does this joy correspond to what we call happiness?**" Joy is **NOT** the same as happiness, because happiness depends on circumstances. When these people were grieving or in pain, they were not happy to be grieving or in pain, but they **were joyful**.

ILLUSTRATION:

I am happy when the Royals win a baseball game. I am extremely happy when they win the World Series!

I lose my happiness when the ball bounces past Hosmer and the other team wins the game. When good times happen and positive circumstances occur in my life, I am happy. When those things go away, then happiness disappears.

But our **JOY** does not depend on earthly circumstances. **Joy is the end result of a true faith in God that runs deeper than pain or suffering.**

Joyful people will be characterized as happy people. Even though they experience grief and suffering they still exude joy. Joyful people are **THANKFUL** people and **NOT COMPLAINING** people. These believers were experiencing **real** joy and gladness in the midst **real** suffering and grief.

If you are suffering this morning, know that God has ordained that suffering. And if God has ordained your suffering, then He was a reason and a purpose in it. There is meaning in your suffering.

We are told that the reason for our suffering is to "prove" our faith.

1 Peter 1:7 (NASB)

⁷ so that the **proof of your faith**, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, **may be found to result in praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The fire is going to reveal the genuineness of our faith. Our faith is tested here like gold is. Only our faith is more valuable than gold. There is this metal called gold and it is worth a whole lot. We would not complain if we had a lot of it. But there is also a metal that looks like gold, but it has no value. It is fool's gold.

Just like gold, there is also a genuine faith that is even more valuable than gold. But there is this other thing, that on the surface looks like faith, but it is not faith and it is not worth anything.

James 2:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

We may claim to have faith, but if it does not hold up to the fiery testing of our faith, then it has no value. **It is the fiery testing of suffering that proves the genuineness of our faith!** And when our faith withstands the fiery testing of our sufferings, it generates **JOY!**

II. Our Source for Joy.

Remember how verse 6 started? ⁶ **In this you greatly rejoice**, What is the "This" that Peter is referring to? Let's go back and look at the previous verses.

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NASB)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The "This" that Peter is referring to is all the things that God has done for us!

- We love God because He **sent Christ to die on the cross** for our sins!
- We love God because we have been "**born again**" into a new life in Christ!
- We love God because just as Christ resurrected from the dead, we have the assurance that we too will raise from the dead to be with Christ!
- We love God because we have **received an inheritance of eternal life** with Him which is free from all the sin that surrounds us today!
- We love God because He **protects us through our FAITH!**

We don't serve God through obligation...we serve God through LOVE for all that He has given to us through His mercy.

1 Peter 1:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Peter is telling us that **LOVE** trumps our circumstances. If you face negative circumstances in your life and you **lack** joy, **you do not have a CIRCUMSTANCE problem, you have a RELATIONSHIP problem!**

It is through LOVE that we serve Christ and it is through LOVE that we can experience JOY despite our trials.

III. Experiencing Joy Amidst Trials.

True love requires action.

John 14:21 (NASB)

²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me;

Love is not just a feeling. Love produces an action. If there is no action, then the love is deficient.

But we also know that **if** there is not a genuine delight in doing the actions, then the love is still deficient.

We can do all the right actions, but if there is not a delight in it, we know that something is wrong.

ILLUSTRATION:

For example, let's imagine that I begin to bring flowers home for June every day, and I start preparing romantic dinners for her by candle light. That would require a **fantastic** imagination, but let's pretend that it were so.

If I did all those things, the actions would be good. But, what if I hated every minute of it and I only did it because I felt that she would be mad at me if I didn't do it?

Do you think June would be satisfied with that attitude? The **real** reason she would want me to do these things was because I delighted to do them.

The same is true of our love for Jesus Christ. A true **love** for Christ **will** motivate action, but if there is no delight in Who He is and What He has Done for Us, then there is something deficient in our faith.

Just in case you may think I am making this up, let's verify it through scripture.

Revelation 2:1-4 (NASB)

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

² I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

Let's review the duties that these believers have done.

- "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance." They have strenuously labored for the Lord and they have done it with perseverance!
- Notice verse two. "you cannot tolerate evil men". They have kept themselves holy and resisted evil.
- " you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false." They defended the right doctrine. They defended the purity of the Gospel and the Word of God.

They stayed steadfast and endured suffering and did not grow weary. What more could they possibly have done? They have done every duty!

And then we come to verse 4.

⁴ But I have *this* against you, that you have left your **first love**.

Jesus is telling them "**that you have left your first love**". You are no longer serving me through love.

ILLUSTRATION:

Remember when you were engaged and anxiously awaiting the wedding? You were totally focused on each other and spent every moment you had with each other. You thoroughly enjoyed each other's company and invented things that you could do together. This friendship was a result of truly enjoying each other's company instead of a feeling of obligation.

The problem with the church of Ephesus was that they were giving the flowers and preparing the candle lit dinners, but they were doing it through obligation instead of **LOVE!**

CONCLUSION:

- This morning I pray that we will work to build a stronger relationship with God.
- I pray that our faith can be increased as we face our trials resulting in greater **JOY!**
- I pray that we can learn to love and trust Him more and the world less.
- I pray that we learn how to serve God more through **love** and less through the feeling of **obligation**.

You cannot offer yourself to the Father as a perfect sinless person, therefore, you accept the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on your behalf." When you do, God washes away your sins with the blood of Jesus Christ.

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again, By His counsels guide uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you, God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet...Till we meet, Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet...Till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.