The Joy of Salvation, Part 1
1 Peter 1:6 7
60-7

Tonight for our time in God's Word together, we return to 1 Peter chapter 1. We're looking at verses 6 through 9 in this wonderful epistle. Before we look at 1 Peter 1:6-9, however, let me remind you about one of the most treasured chapters in all of God's Word, namely Luke 15. You don't need to turn to it, I only want to refer to it.

In Luke 15, our Lord Jesus tells three stories. One of them is about a man who had 100 sheep and lost one, another is about a lady who lost a valuable coin, another one is about a father who lost a son, whom we now know as "the prodigal son." In each case, the story represents salvation. The lost sheep is found, the lost is coin is found, the lost son is found. Each of them pictures a lost soul brought back to God, forgiven and blessed.

And in each story there is a common response. At the end of the story about the lost sheep it says, "And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and *his* neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." And then our Lord says, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need not repentance."

In the case of the lost coin, when she found it, she called together her friends and neighbors saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the coin which I had lost." And then our Lord says, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

In the story of the lost son who was found, the father said to his slaves quickly, "Bring out the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on *his* feet: And bring the fattened calf, kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry: For this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found. And they began to be merry. Now when his older son was in the field: and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing."

In each case there was tremendous joy, tremendous joy. The thing that I want you to note in your mind is that salvation and celebration go together. Salvation and joy belong together. Being made right with God is cause for joy: Joy on the part of God, joy on the part of Christ, joy on the part of the angels, joy on the part of the church, and joy on the part of the one who is redeemed.

Now this salvation joy is Peter's theme. Will you look with me now at 1 Peter chapter 1? He mentions salvation in verse 5, "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." In verse 9, "the salvation of *your* souls." In verse 10, "as to this salvation the prophets have made careful search." Three times from verse 5-10 he uses the word "salvation." Salvation, then, is an element in Peter's theme.

You will notice, also, in verse 6 that he talks about joy, "In this you greatly rejoice." In verse 8 at the end he says, "you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." Now, what I would conclude just very simply from that is that Peter has in mind here that we would not only understand salvation,

but its implication, namely joy.

Salvation joy is on Peter's heart in this passage. It's fitting because it's reflective of what Peter knows about the revelation of God. The psalmist, for example, in Psalm 4:7, says, "God put gladness in his heart." Isaiah, writing in 35:10, said that the ransomed of the Lord will come with joyful shouting, with everlasting joy. He also said in chapter 61 that Christ was coming to give "the oil of gladness." And he spoke for all the redeemed in verse 10 of that same chapter when he said, "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation."

You also remember that when the angels announced the birth of Christ, they said that there was a Savior coming and that His coming was bringing "good news of great joy," Luke 2:10. Joy and salvation were linked by the Apostle Paul. He wrote that the Thessalonians had "received the gospel message with joy," 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

Now the sum of all of that is simply to remind us that joy is a result of God's gift of salvation. And all of us who are saved should experience that joy. That's why Paul exhorted the Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 with these familiar words, "Rejoice always." To the Philippians he said, "Rejoice always, and again I say rejoice." Why? Because joy and rejoicing is an element within the saving work of God.

And when, however, sin comes into a believer's life, joy will depart. And David expressed that, didn't he, in Psalm 51:12, when coming out of the terrible sin of adultery and murder, he cried out to God and said, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." Joy is an element of salvation. It can be forfeited by sin, at which point we are to be exhorted to experience again the joy that God has provided for us. Salvation, then, has built-in joy, that every believer should experience constantly.

Now, the question that comes to our minds is how do we experience that joy? How do we capture that joy? Let's face it. Most of us are not all the time filled with joy. We're not all the time experiencing rejoicing. What, then, is it that restores that joy? What is it that motivates that joy? What is it that captures that joy? What is it that discovers that joy? Well that's exactly what we're going to find out from Peter in verses 6-9.

Before we look at those verses specifically, be reminded that it's important for Peter to bring up the subject of joy because his readers need so much to be reminded of it. They are at a very difficult situation. We have studied enough about this epistle in our brief time here to know that the ones to whom he writes are under persecution. They have been among those Christians of that ancient world blamed for the burning of Rome. They were despised, and hated, and rejected by many people, even without that added slur. And so they were under some very severe persecution.

In 2:12, for example, Peter says, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles: so that, in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of *your* good deeds, - " and so forth. They were being slandered as evildoers. In verse 19, the implication is that they were literally having to suffer unjustly. And Peter says, "bear up under this unjust suffering." In verse 20, it says they were being harshly treated and called upon to endure it with patience. In verse 21 he says to them, "You've even been called for this purpose: Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, for you to follow in His steps." He suffered, and you will suffer, as well.

In 3:9 he says, “Don’t return evil for evil, or insult for insult: but giving a blessing instead.” The implication is they were doing evil to these Christians. They were insulting these Christians. They were not to retaliate. Verse 14 says, “You are suffering for the sake of righteousness, and thus *you are* blessed.” And he goes on to remind them to give a defense for the faith and the hope that is in them, and “sanctify the Lord God in their hearts.” And if need be, in verse 17, “suffer for doing what is right, rather than what is wrong.”

First Peter 4:1, “Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose.” 4:12, “Don’t be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you: To the degree you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing so that at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exaltation.” Verse 14 tells us they were reviled for the name of Christ. They were suffering, verse 16 says, as a Christian, and we’re not to be ashamed, but to glorify the name of the Lord. And verse 19 says that if you suffer, commit yourselves to God. First Peter 5:10 says, “after you’ve suffered for awhile, God will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish *you*.”

Now, all of those verses let us know in no uncertain terms that they were in a very, very difficult time. It was a time that easily could rob them of their joy. And that is why Peter ties joy into their salvation, reminding them of the blessedness of knowing God through Christ and that they should know joy in spite of all of that. They’re facing difficulties that in no sense should diminish their joy.

Now let’s look at verses 6-9, and you listen as I read. “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 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; 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, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

That is a rich, marvelous, profound statement. And it opens up to us this whole matter of joy. Peter really answers the question here implicitly that we asked earlier, what do believers in the midst of trouble need to focus on to regain their joy? Where do I go to find my joy when my circumstances aren’t all I would like them to be?

Just in general, did you notice as I read that that joy is connected to that sort of holy and familiar triumvirate of faith, hope, and love; all three of which are referred to in this section? You see, joy is not a shallow brief emotion. It is something very deep, something tied to faith, something tied to hope, and something tied to love.

Joy does not come cheaply. It comes at great expense to God. He lays up the treasure of joy in heaven through the sacrifice of Christ. He provides that joy through all our trials by the ministry of the Spirit of God. And so the expense to the Father was to give us the Son and the Spirit in order that we might experience joy.

And you’ll remember that when we were studying Philippians a number of weeks ago, we said the joy is produced by things that are much deeper than the things that produce happiness. Positive circumstances produce happiness, a positive relationship with the living God through Christ produces joy. Happiness comes from positive events. Joy comes from a deep down confidence that your life is

hid with Christ in God. Joy is connected with salvation.

So, you say, “Well, John, where do I look at my salvation to get that joy, to discover that joy, to focus on that joy, to capture that joy?” Peter tells us five things, five points of contact to rediscover your joy. I don’t know where you are in your Christian life, but if you’re not rejoicing always, if you’re not rejoicing always in the Lord, if you don’t have that deep down sense of peace and satisfaction, that glowing heart, that burning exhilarating thrill in your life no matter what the circumstances are, you need to get your joy back, and Peter gives us five perspectives.

Your joy is going to come from deep within. It’s not related to your circumstances. It’s not related to what you’re experiencing in one sense. In another I’ll show you that it is. It comes from confidence in certain things.

The first one. It comes from confidence in, one, a protected inheritance, a protected inheritance. This is the first great verity that brings salvation joy. Notice verse 6, “In this you greatly rejoice.” In what? “This” refers back to verses 3-5. “In this you greatly rejoice.” That word “greatly rejoice” is a very, very expressive term. Jesus uses it in Matthew 5:12 in the beatitudes and it’s translated in the Authorized Version, “Be exceedingly glad.”

Peter uses it three times, and Paul never uses it. It is a much stronger word than the word to rejoice, *chairō*, much stronger. It means “to be exceedingly glad, to be super abundantly happy” in the profound sense, not in the circumstantial sense. And so he calls for great rejoicing.

The word is always used of spiritual joy, never temporal joy. It’s always used of joy that comes from a relationship with God, never used of joy that comes from a relationship with anybody else. And since it’s in the present middle voice in the Greek, it has the idea of a continual exuberant joy and gladness. You could translate it, “be jubilant, be exuberantly glad.”

And so he calls for great rejoicing. Over what? “In this,” he says, “you greatly rejoice.” What does “this” refer to? We have to go back to verses 3-5.

“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, To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, and undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are - ” here it is “ - protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

We studied that last time. And we said that Peter here is talking about a protected inheritance that every one of us in Christ have with God. God, through His mercy, has caused us to be born again unto a living hope, and that is a hope that ever lives, and that hope is that we will receive an eternal inheritance. The inheritance can never perish. The inheritance can never be defiled. The inheritance can never fade away. And we can never be disqualified, for we are protected by the power of God. So we have a protected eternal inheritance. “In this,” he says, “you are jubilant.”

Where are you looking for your joy? That’s the question. Are you looking for your joy in your circumstances? It isn’t there. Circumstances will betray you. But if you recognize that your joy can be found in your protected inheritance, nothing can touch that. The marvelous promise of God to every

believer is that we have an eternal, imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance, which is our ultimate glorification in final salvation. It is presently reserved for us, securely held in heaven until the last time when we see Jesus face to face. That glorious eternity which God the Father by mercy has granted to us through the new birth is the hope that fills our hearts. “In this you rejoice.”

Beloved, get your eyes off this world. Quit looking for your satisfaction here. It’s your eternal glory in heaven that is the focus. Paul said it, “Set your affections on things - ” what? “ - above - ” Colossians 3 “ - not on things on the earth.” You have the promise of a full and eternal salvation, reserved for you in the safest place in the universe, the holy heaven of God. Nothing can happen to it and nothing can happen to you. What a source of joy. To realize that our full inheritance is waiting for us, that we are secure, nothing can ever alter that, and we await that inevitable moment when we receive the inheritance. That is cause for joy, cause for joy.

There was a moment in the New Testament when that joy perhaps was elusive, that joy of a protected inheritance. In John 16, you remember Jesus talking to the disciples? He said, “A little while, and you’ll not see Me; again a little while, and you will see Me. Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice;” Why? Because I’ll be dead - I’ll be gone and you’ll weep, and the world will rejoice. You’ll be sorrowful. And then He said, “But your sorrow will be turned to - ” what? “ - to joy. Whenever a woman is in travail, she has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more for joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.”

There was a dark hour, the time when Jesus was in the grave. And joy was really elusive because the promised inheritance hadn’t yet really been verified. It was fine for Jesus to say, “I’m going to prepare a place for you, and I’m going to come again and take you to be with Myself,” but when He was dead in the ground, it was a little hard to hold onto that. And there was a moment of sorrow.

But when Jesus burst out of the tomb and saw those disciples, their sorrow was turned to joy because the promise of life after death for them seemed more believable since Christ had conquered death Himself. And it was even more implied in that text in John 16. I believe Jesus was even going beyond His resurrection and talking about the coming of the Spirit. There was still a time of difficulty even when Jesus rose from the dead, when the disciples were struggling in their hearts with all that was going on because they had not yet received the resident Holy Spirit. And then Jesus said, “I’m going to go away and send you the Spirit, and the Spirit will take up residence in your life.” And the Spirit is the source of joy. For Galatians 5 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy - ”

Jesus had both in mind, no doubt, when He said, “Your sorrow will come, but your sorrow will turn to joy. You’ll weep for awhile, but then your weeping will turn to joy which no one will ever take from you, because it is joy based on the resurrection, joy based on the coming of the Spirit.”

For one brief moment in time the promises of God through Christ to His own seemed elusive and the joy seemed absent. But when the resurrection came, and soon after the Holy Spirit came, the joy of future inheritance came to life, and no one will ever take it away again, never again. That’s why Paul in Romans 5:2 says, “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” That’s why he says in Romans 12:12, “Rejoicing in hope.” Because his hope is in the resurrection, and his hope is generated by the indwelling Holy Spirit who is - mark it - the guarantee of our protected inheritance.

In Ephesians 1:12, that wonderful portion of Scripture, says that we have “hope in Christ,” and then in verse 13 it talks about “the message, the gospel of salvation, and having believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise - ” listen to this “ - who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.”

The Spirit of God is the down payment on your protected inheritance. He is the *arrabōn*, Paul uses that word. It means “engagement ring,” to verify that the wedding will really come off. You can rejoice, beloved, at your glorious inheritance, kept for you, and you being kept for it. And nothing can ever steal your joy, because that joy is built on historical fact, the resurrection of Christ. It is built on a present experience, the indwelling power and presence of the Spirit of God. That’s joy. And that’s joy over a protected inheritance.

Now if you’re going through trials in life, instead of looking at this mundane temporal world with all of its problems, you need to look at your protected eternal inheritance. If you’re having trouble with that, get the series on heaven and go over it again. Now I’m not talking about pumping up emotion, you understand that? I’m not talking about something artificial, facetious or insincere. I’m not asking you to pretend to have a joy that isn’t real. I don’t think you can manufacture joy. I don’t want you to deny pain. I’m not asking you to deny suffering. I’m not asking you to deny sorrow or deny trouble. It’s not going to go away. But I am saying, decide which way you’re going to look.

You look out, in life, of a window. You’re like a train. Imagine a train passing through the mountains. We’ve all had that experience, or most of us. And on this side of the train - and it’s a train with a lot of windows to see, maybe you’re up in the observation car. And on this side is a high mountain, and you’re running very close to it, and all you can see is dark shadow. On the other side, magnificent valleys, and meadows, and streams, and lakes are in your vision, stretching as far as your eye can see. What are you going to look at?

Well some people in life just choose to stare at the dark mountain. That’s their perspective. On the other hand, if you want to rejoice, look at your new life, your new hope, your new wealth, your security in Christ. How stupid to sit tormented by the darkness because you chose to look out the wrong window. And undoubtedly the reason that so many Christians are miserable, weighed down with burdens, and guilt, and unfulfilled aspirations, and broken resolutions is because they don’t look at their glorious, protected, eternal inheritance.

Your joy - now listen carefully - must be in great part the joy of anticipation, the joy of anticipation. And that’s valid. Hey, you live with the joy of anticipation in a temporal sense. You get all pumped up months, and months, and months before you go on vacation. Usually, the anticipation is better than the actuality. You’re about three days into your vacation and you’re saying to yourself, “Why am I spending all this money?”

But I’ll tell you one thing, that’s the way life is. You anticipate a new car, and pretty soon it’s not what you thought it was, a new home, and pretty soon it’s not what you thought it was. In this case, reality will far exceed anticipation. But anticipation is enough to give you joy. Keep your eyes on your protected inheritance.

Secondly, the next source of salvation joy is not only a protected inheritance but a proven faith, a

proven faith. This is so practical. “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.” This is a very rich concept. I may not even get through this tonight, probably won’t. But you’re going to get a great lesson here.

Now listen to me carefully. I just told you to focus on the joy of anticipation. Now here’s the balance. Here’s another kind of joy. Here is a joy that is even though you are now going through various trials. Now that brings it right back to this world so that it’s - now watch this - it’s not only how you view your future, but it’s how you view your present.

Joy comes - now listen carefully - not in spite of trouble, but because of trouble. It comes through trouble. How? Because “trouble - ” verse 7 “ - is the proof of your - ” what? “ - your faith, which is more precious than gold.” God brings trials into your life to prove your faith.

Some people think that severe persecution, severe trials of believers steal the joy of anticipation. No, they add to the joy of anticipation. They add to it. Why? Because the one great thief of the joy of anticipation is doubt about what? Salvation. If I am worried about whether I’m saved or not, it’s very hard for me to enjoy the prospect of my future. So this is very important. So Peter slides from the future into the present, from what might seem to us as anticipation into reality.

As I have told you through the years, God has a way of saying things with an economy of words that is absolutely beyond human comprehension. And in that one little sixth verse, is a description of trouble that is so profound, in fact I didn’t see it until I kept reading it over and over, and finally it dawned on me the depth of this statement. Just about everything you need to know about trouble is in that one verse. Now let me show you. Let me give you some principles, okay?

Principle number one, trouble doesn’t last. Isn’t that good to know? It doesn’t last. Verse 6, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while,” or a season. It’s temporary. It’s transient. It will go away with this life.

There’s a second principle here. Trouble doesn’t last, but trouble serves a purpose. Look at the verse again, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, - ” next two words “ - if - ” what? “ - necessary.” You know why trouble comes into your life? Because it’s what? Necessary. Trouble serves a purpose.

You say, “What’s the purpose? I don’t get the purpose.” Well, let me remind you. To humble us, fair enough? To wean us from worldly things. To help us look to heaven. To reveal what we really love. To teach us the value of God’s blessing as over against the pain of life. Trouble comes to enable us to help others. Trouble comes to develop enduring strength in our character and trouble comes sometimes to chasten us for our sin. It serves a purpose.

Peter said in 5:10, “After you’ve suffered awhile, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, *and* establish you.” God has a purpose in it. Make you better.

Third principle comes out of this little verse. Trouble brings pain. Nobody ever denied that. “Even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed.” God knows about it, that’s why He brings it. He’s talking about mental anguish, not just physical, mental anguish: Sadness, sorrow,

disappointment, anxiety. Sure, trouble brings pain.

So we have a little theology of trouble here. Trouble doesn't last. Trouble serves a purpose. Trouble brings pain. It's supposed to be painful. Did you get that? That's its point. It's supposed to distress you, to drive you from the world to the Lord, to purge your sin, to refine you for greater usefulness.

There's a fourth principle. Trouble comes in many forms, have you noticed? Verse 6 says, "Even though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials," *peirasmos*, "trouble, trials." It comes in many forms. The word is *poikilos*, it means "many-colored." Trouble is many colored.

By the way, Peter uses that same word one other time when he describes the many-colored grace of God. That's a beautiful thought. Trouble is multi-colored, and God's grace is *poikilos*, multi-colored. It's as if there is no color trial that God can't match with a color of grace. Beautiful thought. Grace to match every trial. It comes in many forms, you just think you've gotten over one, and another one comes.

But last little principle. Trouble doesn't, shouldn't diminish joy. Notice verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice - " here it is " - even though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials." You greatly rejoice even though you are in trial. The point being trouble doesn't diminish joy. It shouldn't diminish joy.

Why? Why shouldn't it diminish joy? I'll tell you why. Verse 7, "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;"

Now listen to this very carefully. This is a profound truth. Peter says, "Here's why trials don't take your joy. Here's why trials produce joy. Because if you pass through the test, your faith becomes proven." I don't know about you, but that's an exciting thought. Trials prove the validity, the genuineness of our faith. That's a tremendous benefit.

If you went through life and never had any trial, never had any trouble, your faith was never tested, you wouldn't know your faith was real. That's basically what he's saying. "That - " is in order that, it reflects purpose; trials come, various trials come, they distress you, they are necessary, they are temporary, they don't steal your joy; they come in order that the proof of your faith, or in an adjectival sense that phrase should be translated, "The tested residue of your faith." They come like fire to burn the dross off the metal, to see if there's something real there. The faith is really revealed in the trial. It's genuine if there's something there when the fire has done its burning.

God's purpose in trouble - now listen carefully - is to test your faith. For who? Him? Does He need to test your faith? Does God need to do something to find out if you're real? No, He knows what's in your heart, right? So who is the test going to benefit? You, you.

The word for "proof" here in verse 7 is used because it is borrowed from the process of assaying metal, and that kind of assaying of metal was to determine its true character, discover its purity, put in a fire, and burn off everything else, and what was remaining would be the true content. By the way, if they put something in the fire and there was nothing left, there was - they knew there was no

real metal, no gold at all. That happened to Judas, didn't it? Put through the test, the fire, he proved to be zero.

God tests the believer to reveal whether his or her faith is genuine, just like He tests gold - and it mentions gold in verse 7 - that's tested by fire. Fire equals trials. The gold is your real faith. And when the fire comes and all the dross is burned off, the real faith is revealed.

Now it kind of works like this. Think this through, okay? Your heart is grieved, okay? You're going through trouble, trial, suffering, pain. And you're in the midst of anxiety and all of this. The environment around you is collapsing. Nothing is working out the way you want it to work out. You're going through all kinds of pain and concern. And you start to look around for somewhere to put your comfort. Most people in the world put it in money, friends, booze, drugs, sex, vengeance, whatever. And the trouble burns up everything because everything they put their trust in is also going to be consumed. None of it lasts. It will all burn in the fire.

The Christian rises above all that. He rises above everything that is subject to change, and decay, and he casts his anchor, as Hebrews says, within the veil in the heavenlies, where joy is unalterable. The source of joy is permanent.

And that's exactly what Peter is saying here. When you go through a test, if you try to solve that by more of the junk of the world, it will go up with the rest of it. But if you rise above that by faith and hold onto God and Christ, your faith is proven. The point is if you come out the other side of the test believing God, trusting God, believing Christ, trusting Christ, then you know your faith is what? It's real. It's real.

Now that's precisely what our Lord said in Matthew 13. There's some seed goes into the ground, the plant comes up, the sun comes out, scorches the plant, there's no real life there, no way to tap the roots, and under persecution and trouble the thing dries up and dies, and never bears fruit. Believe me, trouble, testing, persecution, and trial reveals the character of faith. Trouble comes to prove whether your faith is genuine.

Let's look at that for just a moment. Back in Genesis chapter 22, you remember Abraham, God said, "Abraham, go up and kill your son on Mount Moriah." What a tremendous trial. The son of promise, the son of covenant, go and take his life. And do you remember Abraham in absolute obedience to God went up there, and lifted up the knife, ready to do it. After all, God said to do it and he was going to believe God, even if God had to raise his son from the dead.

The writer of Hebrews says the reason he was willing to kill his son was because he believed in the God who raises the dead, even though he had never seen a resurrection. As far as we know, there had never been a resurrection. He believed that God would do that, because he believed God would have to do that to keep His covenant if Isaac was dead.

So he got up there ready to stab his son. And the angel of the Lord, in verse 11, came to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham." And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad. Do nothing to him." Verse 12, "I know now that you fear God." That was a test. That was a test. "Now we know that you fear God." I don't think Abraham ever doubted that again as long as he lived.

Job was put to the test. And Job's faith proved real. It proved genuine because no matter what Satan threw at Job, he never stopped trusting God. When his would-be friends came with their witless suggestions, he still trusted God. When his wife told him to curse God and die, he still trusted God. God brings trials to test faith, to prove faith real to the one who has the faith, that that one may live in confidence.

Exodus 16:4, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction." God is in the business of testing, not that He might know, but that men might know the state of their hearts.

"And you shall remember - " Deuteronomy 8:2 says " - all the way the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." To show you the state of your heart, not for Him but for you.

Now look what he says back in 1 Peter 1, this is so good. Tested faith, proven faith is "more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire." Even though gold will pass the test of fire, gold is perishable. Proven faith is far more precious. What a thought. Why is it more precious than gold? Because proven faith is eternal, it's eternal. Even though gold is refined, and it passes the test of fire, it doesn't pass the test of eternity. Proven faith is more precious.

Now why does Peter use gold as his analogy? Because of several things. Gold was the standard commodity. We used to be on a gold standard, we aren't anymore. In ancient times, gold was the standard commodity that backed up monetary transactions. It was the most precious of metals, the most highly prized of all the metals, and the standard of all monetary transactions. It was the most precious commodity.

And so, Peter is saying gold, which is so precious, stands the test of fire but does not stand the test of eternity, therefore proven faith is more precious than pure gold. Just as fire separated true gold from the counterfeit, so God uses suffering to separate true faith from superficial profession. It's more precious than gold.

Can anybody estimate the value of proven faith? Do you live with doubt in your life? Then God knows you need more trials, because that will prove your faith to you. I don't doubt my faith. There was a time when I was young that I did. I don't doubt my faith anymore. You know why? Because my faith has stood the test of trials. That's not a commendation of me. I've had a lot of trials because God has had to do a lot of teaching for me to get the message. My faith is real. I can't tell you the value of knowing my faith is real. Can you understand that? What a tremendous confidence that is. Who wants to live in doubt? True faith verified because it has been tested.

Beloved, welcome trials, welcome testings. God's purpose in them is that the proof of your faith may come to be more precious to you than the world's most precious commodities. Tremendous thought. Absolutely tremendous.

The apostles went on their way rejoicing it says in Acts, because they were counted worthy to suffer

for Christ. And if I might be so bold, I might add they must have gone on their way confident, too. Confident in the reality of their salvation because they had heard from Jesus so many times this line, “O ye of - ” what? “ - little faith.”

And when it came to the cross, they forsook Him and fled. And then there was Peter in his denials. And how wearisome was their weakness. And yet they came to the point through suffering where they stood for Christ and they didn’t vacillate. And they went on their way rejoicing, not only because of the worthiness of suffering, but of the confidence of passing the test.

Beloved, we have hope, and hope brings us joy. Our hope is fixed in a protected inheritance in the future and in a proven faith in the present. And therein doth our joy lie. There’s no reason for you not to live in the light of that joy, absolutely no reason at all. That joy is yours. Jesus said no man can take it from you.

I close with this. Those of us who are Scottish by decent endure a lot of grief from people who think the Scottish are miserly. And the stories are replete of such Scotsmen. One that is somewhat familiar through the years is the story of the Scotsman who arrived at Liverpool ready to embark upon a ship for America. He had purchased his passage on the ship. He fingered the few coins that made up his total earthly capital and decided that the trip was going to be a couple of weeks, and in order to make it and have enough food, he would have to economize carefully so that he might have a little bit left when he arrived at New York to start his life. So he went to a small store and packed in his luggage a supply, a large supply of crackers and cheese to get him through his trip.

As the voyage progressed, the sea air made him very hungry. To make matters worse, the dampness in the air made his crackers soft and his cheese hard. Beloved, putting hard cheese on soft crackers is not a happy prospect. He wound up usually with a handful of crumbs. He was desperate with hunger by the end of the first week. To cap the climax, he kept smelling food on the trays the stewards were carrying to the passengers around him. He made up his mind one day that he would have one good meal. So he went into the dining room, ate the meal. At the end asked for the bill. The steward said, “Sir, there’s no bill. It’s included in your passage.”

Poor man. He could have saved all his money that he spent on crackers and cheese. Could have gone to the dining room, eaten as much as he liked. May I suggest that I have met a lot of crackers and cheese Christians? Don’t cheat yourself of God’s provision of joy. Let’s pray together.

Thank You, Father, for this Word to us tonight. Thank You for the rich testimony of Peter, who certainly could have been accused of being a crackers and cheese believer himself, seemingly never able to cash in on what was already his by right because his faith was weak.

Thank You for the testimony in his own heart of how his faith was strengthened by the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit. Lord, help us who are so prone to weakness, so prone to spiritual smallness, so prone to the ridiculousness of not taking advantage of the joy You’ve given to us.

Help us to live in the light of a protected inheritance and a proven faith. Help us to rejoice in the life to come because it is an escape from trials into eternal glory, and help us to rejoice in the midst of trials because they prove our faith, and we can go on our way rejoicing knowing confidently that we have a faith that stands.

May we know joy in all its fullness that we might be a testimony to the grace of Christ, whose joy it is that we have received, for He said, “My joy I give you.” Thank You, Father, for the joy of the Lord, which is indeed our strength. And we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

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