

The believer's faith is mentioned four times in this first chapter. Our joy is mentioned right along with our suffering. For what God has done for us is joyous, yet our experiences now on this earth are characterized by suffering. Our joy is not dampened by hardships and persecution. And our faith, undaunted, triumphs over suffering and attacks. These are but trials of faith. Tests that demonstrate our reality. And that glorifies God. For example, one who finds gold has it tested (assayed) to determine its purity and worth. He may know it is truly gold but he must have reliable independent proof to convince others. Having documented proof of its worth, the owner can then display it for the admiration of all. This is why God allowed the devil access to Jesus after those forty days in the wilderness immediately after His baptism. Jesus was beginning His public ministry and, though God could say "this is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight," He proved Jesus' sinlessness to men and angels through the three temptations in the wilderness. He passed the test. Similarly, God allows us to be tried. When our faith is tried we sometimes fail (as did Peter) for we are not intrinsically sinless. Yet we could pass the test every time through faith. Peter strongly exhorts and encourages along these lines.

It's a "jumping for joy" rejoicing with an "unspoken" unspeakable joy that Peter describes here. Our hearts leap up with unspoken joy. A strange, almost contradictory, thought but it expresses the deeply felt, Spirit given, real feeling believers experience even in the most unpleasant circumstances. Not mere fleshly excitement this! Jesus laid this blessing before the disciples, including Peter, early in His earthly ministry. Peter refers to this here and later in his letter (4:13).

Matthew 5:12 *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

It becomes a common New Testament theme.

2Corinthians 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*

6:10 *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {temptation: or, trials}*

1John 1:4 *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Is there anything more precious than gold? Our faith is more precious than gold. Gold is well known, and highly valued as an inert, almost indestructible, beautiful precious metal. But Peter refers to it as something that perishes, that loses its ability to perform its intended purpose. (Incidentally, here he loosens our grip on earthly wealth and transfers our attention and coveting to heavenly things.) Our faith is tried by fire

and is found to be unto praise and glory at a future time. The time spoken of as our salvation. A salvation which is the end of our faith. The "end" spoken of here is the goal or terminal point sought for, reached for, and finally attained. It is the **appearing** of Jesus Christ. He has been sent to earth already as a lowly man, and rejected. Now we, His own, are rejected with Him but we still anticipate and expect Him to appear publically in His glory before all on earth. (We know also He will return secretly for us, and take His Bride to Himself before He appears publically with her.) But here Peter is encouraging Jewish believers who have lost all their fondest hopes for the appearing of their Christ (Messiah) to take up His reign on earth. We surely need this encouragement today when we see the world hurtling toward certain destruction, spiritually, morally and physically. As Paul puts it,

2Timothy 2:12 *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Yes, **we love His appearing.** Not only His coming **for** us, (the rapture) but His coming (appearing) **with** us. For that is the hope that we rest upon when we see all around us in rebellion and degeneration. This would vex us, as it did Lot, if we had our hope and efforts fixed upon establishing a kingdom for Christ down here. Sadly many believers have been tricked by the enemy into attempting just that. He has successfully diverted them from their heavenly hope and true earthly mission of bringing lost sinners to Christ. Peter has nothing to do with such notions, attractive as they may sound to the human heart longing for righteousness and piety here on this earth. He tells us, yes, the King and His Kingdom will come but not through our efforts. Clearly He will come. The overwhelming preponderance of Old Testament prophesies bear unquestionable witness to that. Peter refers to these, well known to the Jewish believers although, sadly, less well known to believers today. And the New Testament amply witnesses to the coming Kingdom and **appearing** of the Lord. We love His appearing! The Rapture is the **next** event we wait for. Receiving His Bride is essential before the Lord receives His Kingdom. She will reign with Him for ever.

The Old Testament prophets, along with the very angels themselves (including Satan and his angels), did not know these things and were not able to decipher the prophetic word when it was given. They knew it was for future dispensations which would be ushered in by the birth of the Messiah. Yet many believers living today in the first of the new dispensations cannot seem to distinguish the truth that distinguishes this age from the

former. They attempt to mix both together, much to their confusion and God's dishonor. The Old Testament prophets didn't read our "mail", so to speak, and try to live in the future they forecast, although they certainly were rightly curious about what was to come. Likewise we shouldn't ignore our "mail" and attempt to live by the program God had set up for them. We do receive from those Old Testament scriptures many valuable insights and instruction regarding Christ and God's nature, heart and ways and revelations about events still to come which we can anticipate with joy. In fact the Old Testament scriptures were all that the disciples had available in the beginning. Peter tells us in his second letter:

2Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

So Peter quotes liberally from the Old Testament as do Paul and James and John.

The remarkable fact is that the Old Testament clearly witnesses to both the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The Jews were blinded to this by their misplaced, haughty national pride and unwittingly fulfilled the very scriptures they took pride in

possessing.

Romans 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

These scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit as was the New Testament preaching they had heard and received and which we have before us now.

The angels desire to look into this. Apparently they weren't in on the Grand Plan, kept secret from before the foundation of the world. Paul notes they (both the holy and the fallen) now see it as witnessed to by the Church (Assembly). In fact we are witnesses to them.

Ephesians 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

With this, we will now see what actions Peter exhorts us to take to live up to our wonderful calling.

By Ron Canner, October 27, 2004