

Welcome all. Before we get going this morning we want to share our intentions in terms of opening our church back up to public gatherings.

In accordance with our state procedures, we will be opening small groups and essential business meetings back up May 15th. This will include staff and elder meetings, any team meetings and small groups so long as we keep the number of people involved 10 and under.

It's our intention to reopen mid-sized groups up to 50 in the month of June. We'll also try to do some creative get togethers, hopefully outside in our grassy area and possibly even church outdoors so we can maintain our physical distancing requirements. In the first weekend of July, our intention is to reopen with a few significant changes to how we meet. But for all intents and purposes, we will be meeting again in person by the 1st weekend of July. That's the hope for now, and be looking for more specifics and details on that.

We're continuing our series "God of All Grace" and Today's message is "A Proven Faith"

Our text today is **1 Peter 1:6-9**.

You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials 7 so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1. THE BELIEVER'S JOY IS INDESCRIBABLY GREAT.

Last week we focused on the nature of genuine hope—it isn't circumstantial, it isn't self-referential, and it isn't corruptible. It is a reasonable expectation of better days ahead—that expectation has a sure foundation in evidence, it has a unbreakable promise by a God who never goes back on his word, and it is kept in heaven for us—awaiting the day we meet the Lord either in death or his second coming.

And now Peter says this brings us great joy and in verse 8 he calls it as an indescribable joy.

(Illustration: Having Kids): I can honestly say that with every one of my children, I experienced an inexpressible, indescribable joy. Before we had children I often wondered what it was like. I knew what it was like to be someone's child but I had no idea what it was like to *have my own children*. Kerri's joy was different than mine though. Because the intensity of her pain gave her a dimension of Joy that I couldn't experience. I shared her experience of it, but didn't really suffer even a twinge of anguish. Except when she squeezed my hand and almost broke my fingers. Inexpressible joy of new life—not much anguish—Except in the curious case of little Hayden Carl. Our first born son, Tyler took his sweet old time. We even had a couple of false visits to the hospital—a couple of practice runs. For the first kid, I had a map with routes highlighted, a bag packed right by the door for Kerri and I, and I was ready to go at a moments notice. But the boy just took his sweet old time.

So, I thought it would be the same with Hayden. But it was not so. Kerri had the faintest contraction at 9pm, I went to bed thinking "probably one of those phantom pangs" and I woke up at midnight with her shaking me saying "I'm having this baby now!"

I lept out of bed in one of those dreamy states when you don't know if you're awake or asleep and started packing her bag and she said, "No. I'm having the baby now." I said, "No. No. No you're not. Get in the car." She sat down on the floor and little Hayden began to make his entrance into the world and I screamed with terror. I woke up our sleeping toddler, and called 911 and they attempted to walk me through delivering the baby until the paramedics got there. Later the 911 dispatch officer was kind enough to send me the cassette tape recording of our phone call. It can only be described as the most hilarious 911 tape I've ever heard. On the tape you could hear that I was clearly distraught, freaking utterly out—and at one point on the tape you can hear my wife, 911 operator, and my toddler, *all trying to calm Me down*.

The EMT's put kerri on a gurny, wheeled her away and off they drove and I followed with my toddler Tyler in the back seat.

When I got to the hospital I was expecting to watch her deliver him but was informed that she already had him in the ambulance. When I saw him, I caught just a little glimpse of the joy commensurate with anguish that my wife had gone through. It was a joy that I can't describe. If you'd had a kid then you know what I'm talking about. I don't have to describe it to you.

And this is the way that Christian joy is. It's difficult to put into words. We're the blind men whom Jesus has given their sight and we are trying to explain to other blind men who still cannot see what a beautiful sunrise or sunset over a mountain vista. We just can't do it.

Peter says **“You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials trials.”** You see, the intensity of our joy is heightened by the intensity of our trials.

Now, think for a second about finding a lost kid in the mall or at the county fair. You have compassion. Mercy. Genuine care and concern for a little kid who is lost and can't find their mommy. When mama finally finds you both you reunite them and her joy is through tears. My joy, was quite expressible. I could describe it in certain terms. But mama's is inexpressible. Because the rejoicing was preceded by loss, and that kid isn't my kid, that's her kid.

He says **“IF NECESSARY you suffer in various trials”** This doesn't mean you will suffer. Or at least, you may be spared the suffering that others have faced. You may not ever have cancer, or heart disease, or a deadly virus like the flu or this other crazy thing that is going on right now. You may not ever lose a child, lose a job or lose your eye sight. I hope you experience none of that. I pray your life from this point forward is just an unbroken chain of easy and heartwarming experiences—free from even a twinge of discomfort—nothing but balmy seas, clear skies. I pray your heart never aches so much it will break into. That's my genuine prayer for you. But, I HIGHLY SUSPECT GOD IS NOT GOING TO ANSWER THAT PRAYER. If necessary, we all go through various seasons of trials that test our mettle. And suffering that brings a great anticipation of glory.

2. THE TRIALS PROVE THE GENUINENESS OF OUR FAITH.

He goes on to say in the next verse: **“Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”**

- The phrase “show the proven character” is from the Greek word *dokimion* and it means **“the process of determining the genuineness of something, usually the result of a test.”**

Testing in ancient Greece and Rome could involve everything from physical trials—if the person was to be a soldier, or trainer; it could include intellectual trials—such as those involved in a philosophical school; it included moral trials or even skill-based trials—in the case of craftsman apprenticeships.

This was the ancient equivalent of modern credentialing. The gold is proven genuine—revealed by fire.

Paul tells us what the credentials are for a Christian who ministers THE TRUTH AND the healing power of Jesus. **2 Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.”**

The word *dokimos* appears here to refer to a credentialing process—a worker—one who puts some effort and attention into being able to rightly handle God's Word and teach it to others. Proficiency in God's Word is paramount.

The second way that Paul tells us we are credentialed for ministry is the sharing of the burdens of the people of God. **2 Cor. 1:3-7** he says, **“³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. ⁴He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will also share in the comfort.”**

- **We praise and we serve the God of all comfort who comforts us.** This word for comfort is *parakale'ō* meaning **“to instill courage or cheer”** and it is the verbal form of the word *paraclete*—the word Jesus used in John's Gospel to describe the Holy Spirit whom he would pour out on all believers. God the Holy Spirit is God's comforting presence. Jesus said, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”** God's Spirit is present to instill courage and to cheer the believer on in the midst of trials.

[Illustration] I remember the last year of my doctoral program at Talbot School of Theology. I was also scheduled for a summer sabbatical and I decided to write my dissertation that summer. I had also gotten the good

news that a publishing house wanted to publish a book I proposed to them called *Father, Son, and the Other One*—I book I wanted to write about the believer’s life in the Spirit. Both projects before me—complete rejoicing over being able to do them both. Both, a herculean trial—a gauntlet and in the middle of it I became exasperated and I said to my wife, “I can’t do it. I’m done.” She said, “no you aren’t.” She gave me what for—but also spoke words that instilled courage and cheered me on. I ended up finishing both projects.

That’s what the Holy Spirit does in the midst of the cross-shaped life. He instills courage, he cheers us on. He lifts our heads in those moments when we feel we can’t take on more step in this race, experience one more responsibility, or one more test.

- God’s comfort to us becomes his comfort through us. God’s credentialing process for compassionate, merciful ministry to other people in their suffering is giving us the gift of empathy. When I sympathize with you, I can SEE YOU. When I empathize with you I WALK WITH YOU.
- We also share in triumph. I love the spirit of rejoicing that takes place when people hear good news. News they’ve been hoping for, expecting, waiting on. Peter says “you’ve never physically seen Jesus. But you know him. You’ve never watched him walk on water as easily as walking in a meadow. But you Believe in Him. You’ve never watched him call a dead man out of a hillside tomb—but by God the Holy Spirit YOU KNOW HIM—and you know him in a way that is intense to your inner being. You love HIM. And right now you rejoice in a sure hope. Sometimes, there’s nothing to do but rejoice in an unseen hope.
- But most of time, we rejoice in the life that is so full of God’s blessings. Where do we even start. Most of the time I am of sound mind and body. Most of the time I feel the love and care of those around me and my needs are relatively well met. Most of the time God’s abundance is a tangible reality. Life is good. And it’s supposed to be. Did you hear that. LIFE IS GOOD. AND IT’S SUPPOSED TO BE.

[TAKEAWAYS] IF God has given the believer the potential for an inexpressible joy—then what holds us back? If God has given us the opportunity to grow through hardship—to be credentialed by receiving comfort and being a vessels and ministers of his mercy to others—what’s keeping us from this blessed life?

1. **We must change our mindset.** Trials are temporary, and they are opportunities to experience an unspeakable joy.
2. **We must change our objective.** Our objective in life is not to extract every moment of fleeting happiness we can from this life—but to set our hopes on that which we do not see. To fix our eyes on Jesus, the author, the finisher of our faith. To live with an anticipation of the salvation he will bring us. And in the meantime, we choose to colonize the world with the life of heaven. To exhibit resurrection life and joy right here, right now—in the midst of the testing and trials that demonstrate the genuineness of our faith.