

BECAUSE YOU CAN TURN TO YOUR ROCK IN CRAZY TIMES...

Work through these questions 1 Peter 1:6-12 raises.

(Pastor Kyle's sermon and Pastor Bob's commentary below will help you.)

1. Through Peter's words God is convicting us, because He wants to make us people of conviction. What convictions do you want to strengthen in you? What convictions have taken root in you that you want to root out?
2. We reflected together on Sunday on our great heritage as Christ-followers. It is one of joy! We sang a song together that had this phrase, "We will keep our eyes on you." How do you think this relates to your experience of joy? What things help you keep your eyes on Him amid the concerns of these times?
3. We also reflected together on the grief we have. What grief are you feeling these days for those who do not have Christ at their side? What needs to happen for their welfare that you can be praying for hundreds of times each day?
4. 1 Peter 1:6-12 reminds us that nothing is as precious to us as our salvation. Take time to list for yourself why that is true, not just eternally but for today.
5. What are some things that you have pursued to feel worth and value? What can you do to re-order these so they take their proper place in your life?
6. What might be some things that God is doing in the middle of Earth's present trial that Angels love watching?

A HIGH-YIELDING, BONUS ACTIVITY

A great activity for you to engage this week is to read the short book of Micah in the Old Testament. Micah was a prophet in the latter half of eighth century B.C.

Here's what the book of Micah is about. Micah was looking at the nation of Israel through God's eyes. He saw a mixed-up mess. The faith they lived was a mixture of Yahweh and the superstitions of the gods of the people around them. It was a mixture of God's laws of conduct and the laws of convenience. When injustice delivered something the average Israelite wanted, they employed it. As they did business they behaved dishonestly. They had stopped seeing God as their trustworthy source and taken matters into their own hands. Micah knew that in Moses' writings God had predicted that this mixed spiritual bag was in them. It would shape them. It would produce awful consequences (Read Deuteronomy 28 sometime!).

Micah spoke of these awful consequences. They were closing in on Israel. He also spoke of Israel's hope. A child would be born in Bethlehem. Micah said centuries before He was born that Jesus would be our peace. He would not be just another who would attempt to legislate peace. He IS peace!

Read Micah! Remember when you read about Israel you are seeing a picture of us. It's who we are as humans and where we go. Think about all that our current crisis is showing about who we are. Own the words and phrases that speak to what you yourself drift into. Repent. Take joy in the great words of hope that Micah speaks, particularly in 5:2-5. The baby born in a manger in Bethlehem IS our peace! He was given the name Jesus. Jesus means Yahweh saves! He does!

1 PETER COMMENTARY

A number of years ago I started the habit of journaling my way through various books of the Bible. My goal was to enhance my own understanding of all God has made known to us and placed in writing. I did not try to summarize all that had been written on the verses and the subjects they dealt with. I only wanted to record what my understanding of the meaning of each key word and each phrase of the text had come to be. So you'll find the words of each verse written in bold letters as it appears in the New American Standard Version. This is followed by my thoughts on each phrase of that verse. I do not claim to be right! I do think the positions you will read all fall within the boundaries of healthy theological thought.

I did not mean for my writings to be read by the general public. That means you will find grammatical errors, etc. I simply started the habit for myself and my kids, for them to have my words on something after I hit the compost pile! My thought was, what better thing for them to hear my voice on than the things of Yahweh? It is in that spirit I share with you in the weeks ahead my understanding of 1 Peter. May my thinking on His words become a source of healthy thought and strength to you! — Bob

1:6—In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.

That which gives joy is our salvation and our inheritance. It is not what we are experiencing now. Even when we walk with the Lord through it, this life itself will not be satisfying. We must remember this in our day.

Too often we make promises to people about what their experience in this life will yield if they live it with the Lord, that the Lord Himself does not make. The fact is that our joy will be full when we enter into our inheritance, and before then we will groan (Romans 8:23). It is true that we taste of that life now. But what we are living is still this life in a fallen, sinful world and in failing bodies. Each day we groan, all others groan and the creation all around us groans.

Peter says we greatly rejoice in what awaits this. We do so even though as we wait we are troubled. The glory of what awaits is what we must look at. The present life is temporary and it holds trying times for us. The word here for “various” is the one used to express “many colored.” We never get to the point where we have seen it all in terms of trials. They are multiple and come from all directions.

We must remember that these trials are only for “a while.” This situation is temporary. Our years, however long, are “a while” compared to eternity. Even days and seasons that seem endless will be looked back on as fleeting.

We can be certain that such trials are “necessary.” We should not simply view them as a “necessary evil.” The thing we can be assured of is that all the evil will be shown in the end to have been used to bring about good by God. He is that powerful. The thought of such a day and event when this great reversal is brought about, must cause us to “rejoice greatly.” Faith when it is alive and working, produces joy and rejoicing because it looks at what is unseen (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

1:7—that the proof of your faith, being much 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;

That our trust in Jesus can be such that it documents itself is inspiring! Peter is teaching that our trust is proved legitimate and well-placed to others by becoming visible in our deeds. We do what others cannot do because Jesus is personally present, alive, and active in us each moment of each day.

There is no greater use of our lives than this. It is not that the Lord needs our faith authenticated for Himself. He knows our hearts. He is not, through trial, trying to discern if we trust Him. He knows we do because He is the one who gave us that trust (Ephesians 2:10). But He is seeking to prove our faith to others. He is seeking to prepare us to be an undeniable example for all eternity of ones who trusted God in the midst of an evil empire. He is helping us demonstrate faithfulness with respect to the truth in the midst of lies.

The ultimate thing of value that this planet offers us is gold. It is buried in the earth and we find it. We have learned to refine it and bring greater value to it. There are a number of parallels between gold and our faith. Truthfully, our faith is of greater value than gold. But like gold it is made purer by subjecting it to the refining process. Unlike gold it is not perishable. The day will come when our gold will do us no good even though of the most precious sort, having been refined to the highest degree the technology of our lifetime might allow. Our faith is much more precious. Unlike gold it will be taken with us and will be found to yield what gold was thought to yield.

Three things are mentioned that refined faith will yield. They are praise and glory and honor. These are three things that humans have destroyed each other and all that stood in their paths to get their hands on. Praise is the affirmation that comes from others that makes us feel worthwhile and valuable. Glory is that which distinguishes us from the crowd and gives us a sense of personal significance. Honor is that which others bestow on us that makes the glory and praise “official.” All three are the real things humans crave. They have historically traded, spent or invested their gold to gain these.

Trust in Yahweh that has matured and become seasoned eclipses gold in value. It is the ultimate commodity. It is the kernel that yields the wisdom and substance that equips beyond this life into eternity. It is itself something that must be hung on to in faith because its value will not be revealed until the time of the revelation of Jesus Christ. When the veil is removed and all of humanity views Him and comes to understand who He is, then the real value of all else will be known. With that event praise, glory and honor from Him, the ruler of the universe, will be the sweet possession of those who have persevered in their trust through trial and doubt.

1:8—“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.”

Peter had seen Christ. He was among those who had seen, examined and touched the God-man, Jesus. He was writing to those who had not. There were likely times when their lack of faith frustrated him. But there were, no doubt, times when the presence of faith in people astounded Peter. Though he had been a close companion and friend of Jesus, trusting Him had come hard for Peter!

These loved Christ, though they had never seen Him. The Hebrew concept of love expressed a distinct choosing of someone as one who would receive affection, loyalty, special care, all the thoughts and actions associated with love.. The reader’s choice of Christ was distinct and definite, so that they endured trial and difficulty because of it. They lived this faith though they had never seen the object of it, Jesus Christ. They had not seen Him and they did not see Him. The time of understanding the value of faith, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, had not come. The truth about Him had not been made plain, yet they believed.

Their trust in Jesus was such that it led to a high level of experience with Him, as He had promised. They had remained “in Him” and so drew life from Him. His promise, that their joy would be full (John 15:11, 16:24) had been fulfilled in them.

Peter uses two words to describe the joy of these people. They are said to rejoice greatly. Theirs was not described as being ordinary joy and rejoicing. It was distinct because of its magnitude. They are said to have joy that is inexpressible. Their joy was distinct because of its breadth and depth. Wherever Christianity has gone, though its followers have not seen Christ, they experience joy as if they have. They grow in joy as they follow His Spirit and come to know Him. There is a reality to their experience with Jesus.

If we have no joy we can be certain that our experience of Christ is the reason. One thing is certain, He gives joy. It is felt by all who seek His presence and companionship. Wherever Christianity has been practiced, joy has been the result. When our joy weakens our first response should be to turn to Him. To seek joy apart from seeking Him is the great dead end.

Peter observes that the joy of these believers is “inexpressible and it had been filled (perfect tense) with glory.” The force of this last little phrase is interesting. They have arrived at a state in their experience of Christ where their joy is said to be in the sphere of glorious. There is not just a glory about their experience, where it might be said that glory had rubbed off on them. They had entered into and been immersed in the glory of their faith. It had become theirs in the fullest possible way. Experiencing this glory of the reality of Christ living within is an unparalleled one. It can be matched by no other experience in life.

This expression of Peter’s of the life he observes in them is the life Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10 and 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. There is a glory that has accompanied and gone alongside people’s experience of God. But Christ residing in us through the Holy Spirit has resulted in an experience so much richer that it can only be said to be “in glory” rather than “with glory.” Other things have a sprinkling of glory that accompanies them. Peter is proclaiming to us that there is an experience of Christ in day-to-day living that takes one on a journey into the very core of glory.

1:9—“obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

We can easily see “soul” as referring to a portion of our being. We understand the usage of the word here in this passage when we realize that it often refers in Scripture to the totality of what we are. When we see it we should assume that it is referring to our being in its entirety unless there is a reason in the context to assign any other meaning to it. So this usage here we take to be a reference to God’s plan to ransom our entire being from the fall, to rescue us from its effects in our inner and our outer being.

Peter uses the present tense, “obtaining,” and that is significant. Now a present tense can be used to express something that is absolutely certain. This could be the thrust of this statement, a statement of a virtual certainty in God’s future plan. More likely however it is a statement of an ongoing action, what we are experiencing as we live in the midst of God’s continuous and ongoing action in our lives. Taking the statement in this way allows it to fit well with the previous verses. We are daily seeing our beings “saved” from what they once were and who we would instinctively be. We are being tested and refined by the fire of trial so that our faith is being strengthened and spurs us to different actions and reactions than we once would have had. Our former way of life is being increasingly abandoned. We are becoming more like Christ each day.

One day we will be completely changed in our bodies by the miraculous work of God. This will be the final outcome of our faith, but for today we are experiencing a significant work that will have a significant impact on all that we later become. The words of the next verse build on this particular interpretation of this verse.

1:10—“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry,”

The old Testament prophets knew of a time when man's experience of salvation would be very different, richer and fuller. Beginning with Moses (Deuteronomy 5:29, 29:4, 30:1-6), they recorded words of God that spoke of a work of the Spirit in the hearts of man that would lift men to radical new levels of obedience and conformity to the holiness of God (Isaiah 54:13, Jerermiah 29:4-7, 31:31-34, 32:36-41, Ezekiel 11:14-20, 37:11-14). Their burden was always to bring about the obedience of God's people.

To a certain degree the work of these prophets was futile (Ezekiel 3:4-9). And so they made the careful search Peter describes here for the time when God would "save" His people from their rebellion and pour out His Spirit on them (Joel 2:28-33). It would be an age of grace, when God would come nearer humanity and bless them with spiritual blessing to a whole new magnitude and degree. It was much anticipated by all with a heart for God.

1:11—"seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."

The Old Testament saints sought for a person and for a time, based on what the Holy Spirit was revealing to them. Peter could see in the writers of the Old Testament this burden and inquiry. The prophets knew of a person, one chosen to suffer in behalf of the people's sin. His death would atone for their sin. All the symbols of their worship pointed to this.

From our perspective, we see Christ as somewhat inactive in the lives of those in the Old Testament. We are uncertain of His role. Because the leaders at the time of Christ missed Him as their Messiah, we tend to conclude that the idea of a suffering Christ was unknown. Peter, from his perspective in time, from his own study of Scripture, and from what he had learned from Christ tells us that this was not the case. Christ had been actively revealing Himself to the prophets and they had both understood and had written the truth about Him down. They had gotten the message loud and clear and were searching for the person and the time.

The message was consistent among these various writers. The sin of Israel would be atoned for, the Holy Spirit would be poured out on humanity, then the earth would move toward a day of an appointment with its Creator. Through miraculous and glorious displays of power, He would become its king (Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 2:5-22, Zephaniah 1:7-18, Malachi 4:1-6). They looked for the who and the when of these glorious events. Who would not be looking for the person and the events when the results would be so glorious?

Now who was this "spirit of Christ" that revealed these things to them? It was the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit. This is an example of a verse that has led us to believe in the doctrine of the trinity. The idea that there are three distinct persons that make up the God-head, all of whom are of the same essence, is very difficult to comprehend. We embrace it not because we understand it or can fathom it. We embrace it because it is the only explanation of God that is harmonious with all the statements made about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. We recognize that this doctrine is not explicit in the Scriptures, but it is implicit through a host of statements of which this is one. Here the Holy Spirit is clearly equated with Christ.

What is said here about the ministry of the Holy Spirit during Old Testament times? We often understand the Holy Spirit as having been "with" the people of faith in the Old Testament, but of being "in" the believers of the Church after the time of Christ. This is probably a helpful way to understand this issue. But this simple idea can be understood in a way that makes it an oversimplification (though it is the way Jesus explained it in John 14:7). Here in 1 Peter 1:11 the text clearly states that the Spirit of Christ was "within" the Old Testament prophets? If this is true, what was the change in His ministry after the death of Christ?

We must remember that this verse is not talking about all the saints of the Old Testament. It is speaking of the prophets. The office of prophet was established by God (Deuteronomy 18:15-22), and few were called to it. In and through these individuals the Holy Spirit worked and ministered in unique ways that the average person did not experience (Numbers 11:16-30, 1 Samuel 10:1-13). It is best to understand that He did indwell these men at key times and others as well, but that this indwelling was not the same as the experience that we know. So this is the phenomenon that Peter is speaking of here. Words were orchestrated in the minds of the prophets by Christ, through the Holy Spirit. They were recorded in writing and then pondered deeply by those who wrote them and who read them attentively. Understanding their significance, these individuals searched to know more about the person these words spoke of and about the time these words applied to. Their search was careful, deliberated and persistent. It was also successful.

1:12—“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.”

As the prophets searched for the person who would bring about the “salvation promise,” that work of God’s Spirit in the innermost being of believers that would lead to greater obedience of God, they learned it was for a future time. It could only come about once God’s lamb had been provided (Genesis 22:8, John 1:29), after His grace had provided for the atoning sacrifice for sin. Then the Holy Spirit could take up permanent residence in the innermost being of those whose sin had been justly covered and forgiven. So the prophet’s projections had to do with all who lived after the time of Christ’s death.

These things, the forgiveness extended to mankind through the cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers so that they were joined to God at the deepest level of their beings all were part of the gospel message announced by the Apostles. They themselves were the first to experience His transforming power as He worked in them. They then passed it on to all who would listen as the prophets had predicted, and the new way of living began to spread throughout the earth.

Peter gives us words that express the wonder of this whole experience that is now ours through the Holy Spirit when he says, “things into which angels long to look.” The sight of God joined to man, accomplishing a divine work through imperfect and ruined vessels is a wonder to the angels. The plan and the work excites them. Of the many wonders God has brought about, this is a big one. Just as the prophets realized the import of this phenomenon before it happened and longed to know more about it, now the angels long to witness it and to know more about it. It is a happening of universal proportions. Any being that understands what it is, God joining Himself to humans so as to bring about His own thoughts and deeds among them, knows it is an absolutely staggering miracle that is being worked.

Too often we who are in the middle of it don’t see its significance and we give ourselves to the pursuit of life’s things rather than this that IS life. In the words of Jesus, this is the bread of life, that which sustains life as it was designed to be lived. It is living water, that which quenches that thirst in us for significance and meaning. This is the vine from which true life is sustained, that which makes a river of living water flow out from our innermost being.

