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Practical Faith, Part 3

Many who are “outdoorsmen” testify to two things: First, it is an extreme amount of work to go camping or hunting — the planning, preparing, packing, etc. is incredible. And secondly, once they are out there, they all say it is worth it!

And so it is, family of God, with the “practice” of faith — trusting God in the present for something outside of our control. While our course today may be treacherous, nevertheless laying at the end of our life is that which makes it all worth it! In his *Biblical Theology*, Michael

Lawrence wrote this:

God's...promises are not simply random good intentions. Rather, God's promises together point to and delineate a divine plan for history... In other words, history is not cyclical, a 'mere repetition' of archetypal patterns. Rather, history is heading somewhere. It's linear. It's developing and progressing toward an end that God has already prepared. (Michael Lawrence 2010, 71)

It is that end for which you and I labor and strive!

Peter addresses the end, specifically the telos of practical faith. He is writing this epistle at a time when the Roman world viewed Christianity as an enemy of the state. As such, God's people were encountering extreme persecution! And it was in this context that Peter endeavored to encourage the people of God not to "throw away [their] confidence" but rather to place their faith and trust in God! Peter began by addressing the fuel of faith (v. 6a)- which, as we have seen, is gazing upon the person, work, and plan of the Savior.

He then transitioned into a discussion of how God works practical faith in us. God places us in the crucible which means that persecution, trials, and difficulties are the means that God uses so that we might acquire faith. All of this comes from the hands of a kind and gracious Lord who is tempering the faith of His people so that they might grow. Spurgeon describes it this way:

Untested faith may be true faith, but it is sure to be small faith, and it is likely to remain little as long as it is without trials. Faith never prospers so well as when all things are against her. (Spurgeon 1991, Nov. 12)

Now, when we are enraptured by the person, work, and will of Christ (that is, our faith has been fueled) and then find ourselves in trial, we are NOT burdened for, in the words of William Cowper, speaking of trial, "...the bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow'r. (Great Commission Publications 1990, Hymn 128) That is the value of a tempered faith! For the Christian, it is more precious than gold!

Peter then focuses upon the end or telos of practical faith.

1 Peter 1:7c, "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 text raises an important question: Who is the intended recipient of the "praise, glory, and honor" of this passage?

On account of our God-centered theology it is natural to think that Peter here is talking about God. What is our purpose on this earth? God's "praise, glory, and honor"! Isaiah describes it

this way:

Isaiah 43:6b-7a, “Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory...”

We exist for the “praise, glory, and honor” of God! As that is the case it would be safe to assume that as Peter wrote here, God’s “praise, glory, and honor”!

However, upon a closer look at this text, we discover that God is NOT the One referenced here! First off, consider that throughout the first two sections of this epistle (vv. 3-5 & vv. 6-9) Peter is writing to encourage his persecuted brethren by which he describes that which await them in Christ. And so, in v. 4 Peter speaks of the “inheritance” that awaits us in Christ. Accordingly, the theme of this section is the pointing of God’s people to the future blessing that await them in Christ! Secondly, Peter is talking about a specific event in Redemptive History, “the revelation of Jesus Christ”¹ (v. 7d) which throughout the Bible refers to the Last Judgment.² In fact this is a favorite expression of Peter, used in 1 Peter equal to the number of times the expression occurs in the rest of the New Testament combined! And so to a persecuted people, Peter emphasizes the Final Judgment as an encouragement. Why? Because that event will have special significance for the genuine believer.

This brings us to another question: At the “revelation of Jesus Christ”/the Final Judgment, what is going to happen to God’s people? Speaking of what constitutes a genuine child of God and hence the true Jew, Paul said this:

Romans 2:29, “But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

This is referencing one of the “rewards” promised to the child of God at the end of their life. There is a day in our future when we will stand before God and BE COMMENDED for that which God Himself gives, specifically our faith (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9)! And toward the end of the Parable of the Talents recall Christ’s description of the Last Judgment as Christ speaks of the faithful:

Matthew 25:21-23, “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave [What is that, but commendation?!]; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy [the approbation/gladness] of your master.’ The one also who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’”

Family of God, what awaits us in Christ at the Last Judgment is commendation! On that day, the Lord will verbally commend His servants! Wayne Grudem wrote speaking of Peter wrote:

He does not specify whether this praise is the praise which God gives to his people on the last day (as in Romans 2:29; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 5:4), or the praise which people give to God. It seems more likely that the initial thought is of praise which God gives to his people, since in this context Peter is encouraging his readers to hope in their heavenly reward (v. 4). Furthermore, it is the genuineness of faith which is here affirmed to be more precious (in God's sight, apparently) than gold. But in this present age faith does not receive much outward or evident reward. Therefore it would appropriately receive a reward as an expression of God's approval at the day of final judgment. (Grudem 2009, 69)

Based upon all of this we conclude that the object of the "praise, glory, and honor" of this passage is none-other than the child of God! That in fact is what the Hebrew writer placed before the persecuted people of God as well in his epistle.

Hebrews 10:34, "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward."-

Which brings us to the reward of the child of God. Responding to Peter's declaration that he and the other disciples had sacrificed much for Christ, Jesus said this:

Matthew 19:28-29, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life."

No matter how you slice it, this passage describes the reward of "eternal life" as the CHIEF reward of the believer! Truly, eternal life is more precious and more important in Glory than these things:

- Co-reigning with Christ on 12 thrones.
- Judging the earth with Christ.
- And the "many times as much" rewards that Christ references here.

And what specifically is "eternal life"? The answer is found in the High Priestly prayer of Jesus.

John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Recall, there are two words for "knowing" in the Bible:

1. οἶδα (*oida*)- which speaks of a fullness of knowledge. And so if in the Greek I wrote, "Bob knew that 2+2 equals 4," the word I would use is οἶδα (*oida*).
2. γινώσκω (*ginōskō*)/γινώσκω (*ginōskō*) - which speaks of a progressive knowledge. And so if in the Greek I wrote, "Bob knows that cancer is caused by radiation," the word I would

use is γινώσκω (*ginōskō*). This is that growing knowledge that is part and parcel of relationships...

This is why the Septuagint *LXX* uses this word when it talks about Adam and Eve.

Genesis 4:1a, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain...”

The word speaks of a relational knowing, which in the context of marriage can reference a deep, growing, and abiding love. It is reflected in God’s walking in the Garden of Eden with His people “in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8)! And thus it was Paul’s greatest passion in all of life.

Philippians 3:8,10a, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings...”

It is this “knowledge” that is said in John to be the essence of “eternal life”- a love relationship with Christ; this truly is the Christian’s Chief reward (Matthew 19:29)! But notice, it is NOT their only reward. Christ told His disciples:

Matthew 19:29, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.”

On top a deep and abiding relationship with Christ, do you understand that we will receive many other things on the Last Day? And it is this that Peter is referencing here speaking with obvious specificity, Peter tells us that a proven faith — a tested faith, a faith forged in the fire of affliction.

1 Peter 1:7, “...PRAISE and GLORY and HONOR [for the believer] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In this regard, let’s now look at the reward held out to a persecuted people of God. The first reward is praise, the word in this context is NOT the word for worship or glory; that is δόξα (*doxa*) in the Greek (which we’ll talk about in a moment). The word used here is ἔπαινος (*epainos*) which references *VERBAL* praise, approval, and applause. It truly is the “well-done thou good and faithful servant” of Matthew 25:21, 23! On the last day, all in Christ will receive this glorious approbation.

1 Corinthians 4:5, “Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men’s* hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.”

This is an important verse as it NOT ONLY tells us that on the Last Day God will verbally praise the child of God, butT it tells us that our focus and goal therefore must not be the praise of man today!

In fact, based on Christ's words in Matthew 24:9, "...you will be hated by all nations on account of My name" we rightly ought to be suspicious should the world praise us. It is NOT that it is unwelcomed or wrong to receive, but it most certainly is not what we ought to be looking for one bit. In the words of Christ:

Luke 6:26, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets."

And yet as sinners, we genuinely long for the praises of men, don't we? We long for people to notice us, recognize our sacrifice, and then render to us our "due" praise! And this why persecution is so difficult. It is the exact opposite of everything our flesh desires from this world. Accordingly, when we are the object of the world's disdain, we can feel like we've done something wrong!

In this context, how imperative it is that the persecuted believer know that while the world may NOT notice us or praise us, God does and will do both! On the Last Day right before the wicked are cast into outer darkness, God will personally and genuinely praise, commend, and applaud us before the entire world! Wayne Grudem wrote:

God's purposes in present grief may not be fully known in a week, in a year, or even in this lifetime. Indeed, some of God's purposes will not even be known when believers die and go to be with the Lord. Some will only be discovered at the day of final judgment when the Lord reveals the secrets of all hearts and commends with special honour those who trusted him in hardship even though they could not see the reason for it: they trusted him simply because he was their God and they knew him to be worthy of trust. (Grudem 2009, 69-70)

So awaiting the faithful in Christ is "praise" from the Lord! But there is more. Consider the next word, glory: here we have the word *δόξα* (*doxa*) which, as I just mentioned, has reference to worship and so weight or glory. In what way does the Bible say at the Last Judgment we shall receive glory? It most certainly and most obviously will NOT be in the form of worship. So in what way will God give "weight" or "glory" to the child of God? There are a couple of passages which help us answer that question. Paul speaking of the Christian in Colossians tells us this:

Colossians 1:27, "To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

As Christians, we live with a forward look about us... "...the hope of glory." Yet "glory" here is

NOT heaven, BUT something will occur to us when we get there.

Romans 8:16-17, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*.”

Amazing! Following the Last Judgment, we in some way are going to be glorified along with Christ! Again, does this mean we’ll be praised/worshipped? Absolutely not (cf. Revelation 19:10)! Well then, in what way will we be glorified with Christ? Listen to the commentary John gave in 1 John.

1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

This brings our understanding into much sharper focus. Following the Last Judgment, at some point our bodies will be glorified just as Christ’s is. During His first advent and even after His resurrection, Christ was still living in humility. Yes, there were glimpses, the greatest of which was when Christ’s true identity was manifested to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Matthew 17:2, “And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.”

Yet Christ quickly went back to His humble appearance. But that changed at some point following His resurrection. For what do we read?...

Philippians 2:9, “Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name...”

This obviously occurred following Christ’s Ascension which is why when Christ appears in Scripture following His ascension, we see Him in His true, glorified Person.

Revelation 1:12-15, “And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands one like a Son of Man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters.”

This is the God who has called you, promised to be with you, and commissioned you to serve Him in the life before you today. When that “life” takes on a little more of the miseries of this state that which John here encourages us with is the glorious promise that as He is someday we also shall be.

“When He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2)!

That is the second reward referenced by Peter when it comes to the Tempered Faith. Not only will we ascend into glory, but someday that glory will descend upon us and we shall be like Him and so share in His glorious appearance! And practically speaking, this means that “the glory that awaits us” is the perfect state in which no longer is there pain, suffering, sorrow, sickness, departings, and death! What a glorious day that will be!

This brings us to the last reward referenced here, honor: the word is τιμή (*timē*) which in Christ’s day was a legal term referencing an appraisal of a debt due and then the satisfaction of that debt. When brought into common language it took on the nuance of an “honorarium” and so the receiving of that which is given by way of appreciation. Accordingly, the verbal form, τιμάω (*timaō*), references an appraisal and so the giving of honor/appreciation. Do you have any idea what this practically means? Speaking of the importance of being “ready”, “watchful”, and so “spiritually vigilant”, Christ exhorted His disciples this way:

Luke 12:35-37, “Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps alight. And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes [how are they ‘blessed’?]; truly I say to you, that he [the Master] will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.”

This is speaking of the Marriage Feast of the Lamb! Do you understand that the day is coming when we will sit at a banquet table and Jesus will serve us in a similar way as when He washed the disciples’ feet? But this will NOT be to give us an example, BUT to “honor” us who persevered in the faith! Dr. John MacArthur wrote of this:

In an incredible reversal of roles to demonstrate the master’s pleasure at such readiness, Jesus says he proceeded to gird himself to serve the ones who served him and had them recline at the table as his equals as he waited on them. That is what Jesus Himself did for His beloved disciples (John 13:1–5; cf. Matt. 20:28; Luke 22:27) and will again do at the marriage feast of the Lamb in heaven (Luke 13:28–30). (MacArthur 2013, 160)

In this regard, let me ask you these questions:

- How many hells would you go through to enjoy such an honor?
- How much trial and tribulation would be considered too much for you to forego such a privilege?

In the words of Samuel Rutherford:

...if you saw Him who is standing on the shore, holding out His arms to welcome you on land, you would not only wade through a sea of wrongs, but through hell itself to be at Him. (Rutherford 1997, Letter LIV)

Howbeit you receive indignities for your Lord's sake, let it be so. When He shall put His holy hand up to your face in heaven, and dry your face, and wipe the tears from your eyes, judge if ye will not have cause then to rejoice. (Rutherford 1997, Letter XV)

Again, none of this compares to the chief reward that will be ours for eternity — growing in our love and knowledge of Christ. Yet in the context in which Peter is writing, they are directly opposite of what God's people were receiving at this time:

- They were NOT praised, BUT scorned.
- In their prisons and persecutions, they took on the appearance of beggars and vagabonds, having no place to lay their head- they had no glory!
- And far from being honored, they were the brunt of jokes, ridicule, mockery, torture, and death!

Because of this, many fell away valuing the praise, glory, and honor of man. What they missed was that someday they would be the object of GOD'S praise, glory, and honor if only they endured! And so by way of application, gazing upon the glories that await us in Christ, what becomes of the afflictions we are so quick to bring to God by way of complaint? They truly are...

- "...momentary and light" (2 Corinthians 4:17)
- "...now for a little while" (1 Peter 1:6)
- Insignificant!

In the words of Rutherford one more time:

Hold your grip fast. If ye knew the mind of the glorified in heaven, they think heaven come to their hand at an easy market, when they have got it for threescore or fourscore years wrestling with God. When ye are come thither, ye shall think, 'All I did, in respect of my rich reward, now enjoyed of free grace, was too little.' (Rutherford 1997, Letter X)

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End Note(s)

¹ Peter Davids wrote, "It is an apt phrase, for in the eyes of the NT Jesus already is exalted and already has power and already is present in his gathered church (e.g., Matt. 18:20); what remains is for that power and glory to be demonstrated openly on earth, that is, for it to be revealed or unveiled. That is the point of consummation toward which the church is moving." (Davids 1990, 58)

² cf. 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:13.