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Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

(Part 07 – Our Hope of Glory)

August 21, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:6-9

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 1

Faith is created by God, not by man. Faith is a gift of God given with repentance at the regeneration of our souls – the new birth. You know these familiar words well:

Eph 2:1-10 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,

and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

(4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

(8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Because of this, faith can never be extinguished. Faith perseveres under even the greatest of trials. This is what Peter is talking about here in this first

epistle. And connected with this faith is *joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory*. That is the phrase we want to look at this morning before we move on.

However, before we do that I wanted to encourage you in a very practical way regarding the condition of the world and the church we find ourselves in today.

The Nature of Faith Gives Hope

If you read the newspaper or watch the news regularly, you can come away feeling hopeless. And as a Christian if you are awakened to the truth of the condition of the professing Christian church today, you feel even more hopeless.

Mat 6:22-23 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, (23) but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

You might compare the eye in these words of Jesus to the church in the world. The church is to be the light of the world, leading those in darkness to the light of Christ. Yet we know that so often today, local, visible churches are in darkness themselves, leading the lost away from Christ rather than to

Him, if not by words then certainly by poor and even evil example.

How great is the darkness, indeed.

We see our own nation sliding further and further away from Christ, willfully rebelling against God's Word and increasingly suffering the consequences. All of western civilization, so much the product of Christianity, has spurned Christ and is in decline. In the inner cities of this nation children do not know who their father is and in fact have never even seen a wedding. We all know that violence is on the increase every day.

But what causes me the most grief is not so much the condition of the world, rather, the state of the church. Paul told Timothy that judgment begins with the household of God, and all who claim the name of Christ today would do well to remember this. It is the failure of the church, in my opinion, that is responsible for the evil we see in the world all around us. Any remedy must therefore begin with repentance on the part of all who claim the name of Christ. We could go on and on and on this morning listing the sins of the visible church all of which cause the world to mock the name of Christ. The apostasy grows worse every single day it seems.

And so in such times we would do well to think carefully about the nature of genuine faith. Where does it come from? What is it? Listen as we review the famous acronym of reformed theology – TULIP – and you will see that necessarily *faith* must be a gift from God –

T – total depravity. There is no remaining “island” of goodness or ability, left untouched by the Fall, to be found in the sinner. Nothing in him that would choose God.

U – unconditional election. Salvation is of the Lord. Faith, exercised by the sinner, is the gift of God. There is nothing in the sinner that obligates God to save us or that merits (deserves) His grace.

L – limited or definite atonement. God in Christ actually effected the satisfaction for the sins of His elect on the cross. Christ specifically died for His elect, for His own sheep, and paid for their sins. He did not die in some way for every human being, leaving only a possibility that they would be saved.

I – irresistible grace. Nothing in the universe or even within the elect themselves can prevent God’s purpose in saving them in Christ from being accomplished. Not a single one shall perish.

P – perseverance of the saints. This faith given us in Christ can never be extinguished. None of the elect will ever become apostate. All will be brought safely home into Christ’s presence.

As you can see then, each one of these points necessarily requires that salvation is of the Lord, not of man. The sinner repents and believes the gospel, but has no basis for boasting in doing so because repentance and faith are gifts from the Lord. All that we are in Christ and all the good works we do in Him are His workmanship and entirely for His praise and glory, not ours.

How does this all relate to this terrible condition of the church and the world today? Well, we may certainly be seeing evil on the increase just before the return of Christ. Every generation of Christians hopes they will be the ones caught up by the Lord when Christ comes. This is why our ultimate hope must be in the return of Christ and as Peter puts it –

...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls

However, we would also do well to remind ourselves that there have been number of very, very, very dark times in history in which the Lord chose to effect life-giving revival, working this

faith by His Spirit in the hearts of sinners and radically transforming the church and society. A biblical example can be found, for instance, in the book of Jonah when the king and people of Nineveh genuinely repented and stayed God's hand of judgment.

And I want to read to you a remarkable account of such a miracle that swept through Great Britain and across the ocean to America in the 1700's. Here it is, taken from the biography of George Whitefield by Arnold Dallimore, a Canadian pastor [Banner of Truth Trust, 1970] –

For the past thirty years numerous evangelical people have been saying, "There can never be another revival! The times are too evil. Sin is now too rampant. We are in the midst of apostasy and the days of revival are gone forever!"

The history of the 18th century revival entirely contradicts that view. It demonstrates that true revival is the work of God – not man – of God who is not limited by such circumstances as the extent of human sin or the degree of mankind's unbelief. In the decade between 1730 and 1740 the life of England was foul with moral corruption and crippled by spiritual decay, yet it was amidst such conditions – conditions remarkably similar to those of the English-

speaking world today – that God arose in the mighty exercise of His power which became the 18th century revival....

Our glance [at British history] goes back to 1660. In the violent rejection of Puritanism that then accompanied the Restoration of the monarchy, Englishmen were given to believe that the life of unfettered licentiousness might be indulged in with impunity. In this assurance much of the nation threw off restraint and plunged itself heedlessly into a course of godlessness, drunkenness, immorality and gambling. Legislation was enacted which distressed the Puritan conscience, and in 1662, on one of the darkest days in all British history, nearly 2,000 ministers – all those who would not submit to the *Act of Uniformity* – were ejected from their livings. Hundreds of these men suffered throughout the rest of their lives and a number died in prison. Yet these terrible conditions became the occasion of a great volume of prayer; forbidden to preach under threat of severe penalties – as John Bunyan's Bedford imprisonment bore witness – they yet could pray, and only eternity will reveal the relationship between this burden of supplication and the revival that followed.

During these years a teaching known as Deism was introduced into England.

Deism was not an organized cult, but was a form of religious rationalism advocated by a number of authors. It taught that whatever God there may be is nothing more than the First Cause, a force that made the world the way a clock-maker makes a clock, and having set its mechanism to operate according to certain laws, simply winds it up and lets it run. This Deity, they said, had revealed himself only in creation and that man's sole responsibility towards Him was that of recognizing His being. This vague contemplation they termed *Natural Religion*, and, strangely enough, they claimed that it, and it alone, was true Christianity.

The Deists carried on a vigorous warfare against *supernatural religion* – Biblical Christianity – and in doing so made loud boast about the reasonableness and logic of their ways. They claimed that the Bible could not be a revelation of the Deity, for, had He chosen to reveal Himself, He would not have done so through one small, ancient nation and in a book rendered unreliable by divergent readings. They sought to explain away the argument from fulfilled prophecy by stating that the prophecies were either written after their supposed fulfillment or were so ambiguous as to admit of many fulfillments. They argued that the miracles were unproved and that such dogmas as the

Virgin birth and literal resurrection were no more than pious imagination. Jesus, they said, was merely a man, earnest but deluded, and raised to an imagined Saviourhood by the fancies of His disciples....

...much of the Church was in no way strong enough to withstand the onslaught of Deism. After the ejection of the 2000 pastors in 1662, the Church of England accepted as their substitutes whatever men were available, and many whom it received were sadly lacking in both learning and Christian principles. In turn, the ministerial standards suffered a long and steady decline....

Large numbers of people, both high and low, believing Christianity to be false, dropped all pretence of religious profession. The majority of the populace, however, in keeping with the belief that the Church of England was a necessary support of the monarchy and a key factor in maintaining the peace of the realm, asserted that, despite its outworn dogmas, it ought to be retained. To such persons its rituals were but empty formality; an incident revealing this attitude among the highest circles comes from the record of the death of Queen Caroline:

‘She had been out of health for a long time, and in November, 1737 was on her death-bed...And now we have a

painful but very characteristic scene. People wondered that the Queen did not have anyone to pray with her. To stop these remarks, Robert Walpole [the Prime Minister] asked the Princess Emily to suggest to the Queen that Archbishop Potter should be sent for. The Princess hesitated. Then, although about a dozen persons were present, Walpole added,

“Pray, Madam, let this farce be played; the Archbishop will act it very well. You may bid him be as short as you will. It will do the Queen no hurt, no more than any good; and it will satisfy all the good and wise fools, who will call us atheists if we don’t profess to be as great fools as they are.”

The attitude revealed in this very characteristic scene could doubtless have been found in many a home and many a pulpit throughout the nation.

There was, however, one aspect of the religious question on which the people of England were in general unity. This was the fear of what they called ‘enthusiasm.’ The term meant as much as or more than the word ‘fanatic’ today, and they applied it to anyone whose practice of Christianity manifested any true fervor. In the belief that the wars of the mid-seventeenth century had been caused by over-zealous religion, it was commonly assumed that prayer and

preaching which displayed a vital earnestness would prove a threat to the peace of the realm, and in fear of such an outcome public opinion decreed that everything to do with religion must be quietly dispassionate. Thus, empty formality was the order of the day, and an unwritten law demanded that it remain so.

[And finally] –

Nowhere was the nation’s weakness more evident than in the *Gin Craze*. With the prohibition, in 1689, of the importation of liquor, Englishmen began to brew their own, and so large was the demand that, within a generation, every 6th house in London had become a gin shop and the nation was in an uncontrollable orgy of gin drinking. ‘What must become,’ asked Magistrate Fielding, ‘of the infant who is conceived in gin, with the poisonous distillations of which it is nourished both in the womb and at the breast?’ The nation which had been taught to scoff at self-restraint learned that it had not the strength to withstand the slavery of alcohol.

...Perhaps the worst effect of the Gin Craze was that indicated by Bishop Benson, when, towards the close of his life he stated, ‘Gin has made the English people what they never were before – cruel and inhuman.’

We shall need to remember that it was among a people broken by gin that Whitefield and the Wesleys went about in the nobility of their ministries and that there was triumphant meaning to Charles Wesley's lines on the deliverance effected by the Gospel:

*Hear Him ye deaf! His praise ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come,
And leap ye lame for joy!*

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free!
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me!*

I hope that record of God's gracious intervention gives us hope for our day. Let's close with some thoughts on Peter's words about *joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory* which sustains the Christian in the darkest of times.

Filled With the Spirit of Glory

1Pe 1:6-9 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, (7) so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (8) Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though

you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with **joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory**, (9) obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Filled with glory. A joy filled with glory. What does that mean? What does "glory" mean? I don't think that I fully understand because "glory" in Scripture is a HUGE subject with several different aspects. But let me offer you a suggestion as to what I think Peter is getting at here.

In the Old Testament, the "glory of the Lord" was the *presence of the Lord. The shining, holy, blinding presence of God* –

Exo 24:16 The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

Exo 33:18-22 Moses said, "Please show me your glory." (19) And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (20) But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (21) And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on

the rock, (22) and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

Exo 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (35) And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

See it? It is the presence of the Lord, glorious and shining. This same glorious presence was in Christ (He Himself was that glory) but it was veiled when He was on this earth. It broke through at the Mount of Transfiguration.

Well, what Peter is telling us is that *the joy in the Christian is a joy that is supernatural, that is a product of the Holy Spirit who has filled us by His presence with the glorious presence of God Himself*. Peter will say it again later -

1Pe 4:12-14 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. (13) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (14) If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed,

because the **Spirit of glory** and of God rests upon you.

The Spirit of God is that SAME shining, glorious presence that sustained Christ in all His sufferings. It is the glory WE are going to see in all its unveiled fullness when we see the outcome of our faith, the full and complete salvation of our souls, the resurrection of our bodies, and the glorious New Heavens and New Earth.

Christians rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible – because *it is a joy that is not of this world, it is a joy that comes from heaven, not earth, and so we have the same dilemma Paul did in regard to this joy – we cannot explain it*.

You may not realize it. You may not have had to experience tremendous hardship and suffering yet in your life, but you all have experienced and seen effects of the curse and the fall and sin. Just pick up the newspaper. And if you are a Christian standing for Christ, you have indeed suffered at the hands of a world hostile to Christ.

And yet, still, *you believe the gospel. You believe God's Word. You come to hear His truth each week and in fact you love His Word. You love Him though you have not seen Him. You don't spurn the gospel and reject Christ when you see or experience*

evil. Why? Because Christ in His glory by His Spirit **resides in you** and is sustaining your faith and joy. You KNOW this present world is not forever. This is not all there is. The real glory is yet to come. And for these reasons we can persevere and even rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible.

I wish that I had the ability to keep every single one of you from suffering. I wish I could deliver every one of the many, many Christian women we know from the cruel abuse they are in so they never have to experience it again. I cannot. Probably every single one of you here are going to go through some kind of fiery trial one day – it is the nature of this life. All of you are going to suffer persecution and mockery if you are indeed following Christ.

And here is Peter's assurance to us. *Our faith will not fail when those times come.* It may be shaken, it may wane, but the Lord will never permit this faith, the outcome of which is the salvation of our souls, to be extinguished by the evil one. Never. Can't happen. And one of the reasons the Lord permits hard trials to come our way is so that for His praise and glory, WE will see in the middle of the fire, that inexpressible joy produced by a faith that is not of this world.

Col 1:24-27 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, (25) of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, (26) the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. (27) To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**