

# LOOKING TO THE INVISIBLE CHRIST

1 Peter 1:7-9

## INTRODUCTION

- It is fair to say that this world has “lost God” – not so much by accident, but by a wilful rejection of him (see Romans 1:18-32)
- The question, “Where is God?” is often used by the world to scorn the saints for their continued trust in God during trials. “Where is your God now?” (Psalm 42:3,10; 79:10)
- This is how Christ’s enemies mocked him as he hung upon the cross (Matthew 27:43)
- When the heathen deride us and say, “Where is now their God?” our response is that of the psalmist, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” (Psalm 115:2-3)
- Satan does not care what man worships as long as it is not the true God and true Christ
- Satan is pleased for men to claim to be “Christians”, if their “Christianity” is perverted from the truth
- The essence of true Christianity is not a set of propositions, doctrines, creeds or confessions; it is not obedience to commandments, or observance of rituals
- The essence of Christianity is Jesus Christ and our personal knowledge of him
- Anything that departs from that is apostasy – which means there is a lot of apostasy around us today

- As the apostle Peter writes to suffering Christians, he encourages us in our suffering by drawing our attention to the Almighty God who saves and keeps (vv.3-5), then demonstrates that our trials are a cause for rejoicing, in that trials are God's instrument by which he perfects our faith
- And here in these verses (7-9), Peter sets before the saints the chief object of our faith – the One who redeemed us by his blood; the One who sustains us by his grace; the One who will receive us to himself in glory: the Lord Jesus Christ
- When Christ is centre, when love, faith and obedience to him is pre-eminent, when our hearts are fixed upon him, the trials we face turn into triumphs
- But too often, like Peter walking on the sea of Galilee, we take our eyes off the Lord and begin to sink (Matthew 14:30)
- Or like the Ephesian church, so busy with labouring, but that first love for Jesus is laid aside (Revelation 2:4)
- It is only by *looking* to Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), *abiding* in Jesus (1 John 2:28) and *cleaving* to Jesus (Acts 11:23) that we will steadfastly endure the trial of our faith with rejoicing

## **I. CHRIST PROMISES EXALTATION WITH HIS SAINTS (7)**

- A. The present heaviness of trials will become the eternal felicity of glory
  1. Praise (*epainon*) – laudation, commendation, especially with words
  2. Honour (*timen*) – esteem, demonstrated by actions

3. Glory (*doxan*) – the attribute of God which he bestows on his chosen (John 17:22)
- B. On that day, the praise, honour and glory will be found
1. The *trials* themselves will be glorified and looked upon as precious
  2. The *tried* ones will be glorified with the Lord (Romans 2:7,10; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 3:21)
  3. But most of all the *Trier*, the one who is the Author of our faith, the Sustainer of our faith, the Trier of our faith, and the Finisher of our faith – Jesus Christ, receives the highest praise, honour and glory

## II. CHRIST PROVOKES ADORATION OF HIS SAINTS (8)

### A. The invisible Saviour

1. Many have said, “If I could just see God with my eyes, then I’d believe and follow him.”
2. This was proven false by the coming of the Son of God into this world (John 1:,510)
3. God did walk among us; he showed himself to us by many infallible proofs – and man nailed him to a cross
4. Man’s rejection of God has nothing to do with not being able to see God – it has everything to do with his rebellious heart and love of sin
  - a. “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and

Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20)

- b. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19)
5. Man is by nature an idolater, desiring to worship a god he can see and touch
  6. The nature of the faith that God approves is a looking for and trusting in things *not seen* (2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7; Hebrews 11:1)
  7. True faith is “seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27)
  8. The greater blessing is not upon they who saw Christ and believed, but “they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29)
  9. Since Christ ascended to heaven, we have a greater privilege than Christ dwelling *among* us – we have Christ abiding *in* us (John 14:20; 17:23; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 3:24)
- B. This verse gives the essence of the Christian’s relationship to Jesus Christ
1. Love to Christ
    - a. This love (*agapate*) is not mere warm feelings toward Christ, but a whole-of-being devotion to him, which is manifested by self-sacrificing obedience

- b. It is the believer's response to our Saviour's love to us in giving himself for us (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
- c. It is a divine love, worked in us by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22)
- d. Those who love Christ keep his commandments (John 14:15,21,23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 6)
- e. Loving Christ is synonymous with being a Christian (1 Corinthians 16:22)
- f. During trials, it is this love that sustains us

## 2. Faith in Christ

- a. This believing (*pisteuontes*), while including the mental assent to the facts concerning Christ, goes much deeper to the committing of the heart and will to Christ (2 Timothy 1:12)
- b. It begins with hearing the truth, acknowledging it to be true, then trusting and relying upon that truth for salvation
- c. It is not a once-off decision made at the moment of justification, but, as this word is present tense, an ongoing commitment to Jesus Christ that deepens throughout life
- d. Faith is the companion of love – to love Christ is to trust him (Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 3:17; 6:23; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:13)

- e. Faith is produced by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), proven by trials (1 Peter 1:7) and promoted by the word of God (Romans 10:17)

### 3. Joy in Christ

- a. This rejoicing (*agalliaithe*) is “exceeding gladness” (cf. Matthew 5:12), and is combined with joy (*chara*)
- b. There is no joy apart from its source, God – the closer we are to God, the more we are filled with joy (Psalm 16:11)
- c. Christ came that we might have joy to the full (John 15:11), and he imparts this joy by the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22)
- d. It is “unspeakable”, unutterable, indescribable, transcending human language (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:15)
- e. It is “full of glory” – which we not only anticipate at his coming, but which we presently enjoy even in this present world
- f. This joy is the normal experience of the true Christian – Peter does not say to these believers, “*some of you* rejoice with joy unspeakable”
- g. This joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10), and sustains us through the heaviness of our trials

## III. CHRIST PERFECTS SALVATION FOR HIS SAINTS (9)

- A. The end of our faith

1. The “end” (*telos*) refers to the goal, culmination, consummation of a thing
2. Faith is not an end in itself, but is working towards an end, which is salvation
3. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof” (Ecclesiastes 7:8)
4. “Receiving” is in the present tense, and looks not only to the future glorification of the Christian, but the present experience of God’s grace in salvation
5. “A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul.”

#### B. The salvation of our souls

1. The “soul” (*psuchon*) does not so much refer to that part of man which is distinct from the body and spirit, but our “selves”, that is our “beings”
2. It describes salvation of the highest order – that is, eternal, in contrast to a mere temporal deliverance (such a rescue from a burning house)
3. Christ described the soul of man as being of more worth than the whole world (Mark 8:36)
4. So faith in Christ results in our complete and eternal deliverance, body, soul and spirit, from sin and all its consequences

## CONCLUSION

1. Our purpose in this life is to know the one true God personally (John 17:3; Philippians 3:10)

2. Do you know him, and are you making him known unto others?
3. What is Jesus Christ to you? If he is anything less than your very life (Colossians 3:4; Philippians 1:21), then your priorities are wrong
4. *If asked what of Jesus I think,  
Although my best thoughts are but poor;  
I say he's my meat and my drink,  
My life, and my strength, and my store,  
My Shepherd, my husband, my friend,  
My Saviour from sin, and from thrall,  
My hope from beginning to end,  
My portion, my Lord, and my all.*  
(John Newton)
5. The mark of a true Christian is that he loves, believes and rejoices in Jesus Christ; are these found in you?
6. *"It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them."*  
(A third-century man writing to a friend before his death)