“How to Live as Suffering Saints”

1 Peter 1:8-12

How can we love someone whom we have not seen?

Peter saw, walked and talked with the Lord incessantly over a three-year period of time

As such, he had a tremendous advantage over us

He was also able to see the resurrected Christ

Furthermore, after seeing the risen Lord, he was the first-hand recipient of Jesus’ forgiveness, blessing and affirmation

However, having not had these same experiences does not preclude us from also loving the Lord

We love Him since we know with absolute confidence what He has accomplished for us as described in verses three and four

Christ spoke of those who will believe even though they have not seen Him in John 20:24-29, when confronting Thomas over his lack of faith regarding His resurrection

What is this “love?”

Is it feeling, affection, primarily an emotional response?

No, it is an act of the will, a sacrificial commitment, a constant devotion to believe and follow Christ’s commandments

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So, we love Him since we believe in Him, and therefore we rejoice in Him

It’s one thing to rejoice – that’s singular joy

It’s another thing to rejoice with joy – that’s double joy

It’s yet another thing to rejoice with joy’s that’s inexpressible – that’s limitless joy

It’s still another thing to rejoice with joy that’s not only inexpressible but filled with glory – that’s eternal, heavenly joy

Does this kind of joy generally characterize my Christian experience, especially when I’m going through trials?

If I truly love and believe in Him as the resurrected Christ, this joy will radiate from my life

As verse nine goes on to say, “The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls.”

In other words, this abounding joy is firmly rooted in the fact, His resurrection guarantees my future glorification no matter what I’m going through now

1 John 3:1-2: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

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This certain, future reality gives us present joy

The apostle Paul wrote of it toward the end of his earthly life

2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Presently our salvation is sure but not yet complete

Let’s remind ourselves where we’re on God’s eternal, soteriological timeline

Predestination/Election – Calling – Regeneration – Justification – Sanctification

The last component is what we have already referenced today - our glorification

It’s when God supernaturally gives us a new, perfect body

We will never again experience pain or suffering, either physically, mentally, emotionally or relationally

What a hope we have in Christ!

We are so incredibly blessed and privileged to have a total knowledge of this eternal, soteriological plan of God

Peter goes on to emphasize this in verses ten to twelve

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Listen as I read them from the NIV: “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care. Trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”

The Old Testament prophets only had a part of the picture

This is what is called “progressive revelation”

They only had parts of the story, bits and pieces of God’s overall plan

Yet they longed to know what we do today

What are some examples of this?

Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah did not know who the virgin would be or that this special Son would be Jesus from Nazareth

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Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Listen intently as I read next from Isaiah 53:1-12

Isaiah had quite a bit of information about the coming suffering Servant but He did not have knowledge of some very important facts such as where the Savior Messiah would be crucified and rise victorious over the grave, and ascend back into heaven forty days after this

Micah 5:2: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

So these prophets knew God was going to come into the world in a very significant way but they still only had partial knowledge of His plan

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Peter is reminding the suffering saints to whom he is writing how they have had the gospel of salvation preached to them through the illuminating, infallible guidance of God’s Holy Spirit

What a tremendous privilege!

They had full knowledge in the midst of their trials of what God had accomplished for each one of them on Calvary and through their yet future, guaranteed eternal inheritance

Peter then adds this intriguing footnote

Even the angels remain greatly inquisitive about how God’s eternal plan for us is to unfold from now into eternity

Have we become too familiar with the gospel?

Have we lost the wonder of our eternal salvation?

Have the present struggles of this life eclipsed our joy?

Let’s ask God to revive, restore, and renew us in 2021