

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
January 31, 2016

Glorious Joy

1 Peter 1:6-9

1:6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

1:7 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.

1:8 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,

1:9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

These words were so inspirational. We can feel joy of faith given by God, which shines itself. This joy is indescribable but I will try my best to describe it to you.

1. Joy of Faith

First, this joy is “the joy of faith”. Verse 9 says “obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” The joy of faith is the joy of salvation by believing Jesus Christ.

The word “joy” used in the Bible does not simply refer to happy happenings or fun. It is much deeper than that. Verse 6 says “if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.” The translated word “grieve” is opposite of “rejoice” in the original language. Therefore, the verse 6 reads as “you grieve but you rejoice”. This appears to be contradictory to each other, but it is not in the world of faith. The Bible teaches us that “there is joy even in grief” and “there

is joy which is inerasable by grief.”

Our life does not consist with only joy. As the Japanese saying “have mingled feeling of joy and sorrow,” our life is the same. We may experience more sorrow than joy. A majority of people thinks that if they have sorrow, they have no joy, and if you have joy, sorrow would disappear. However, the joy that God gives us never disappears in sorrow. Likewise, even if we have the joy from God, our life is not always happy without suffering or sorrow. The faith in Jesus Christ is supposed to lead us into happiness, but it does not disguise our eyes from reality and makes us feel as if we are happy. The Bible teaches us in Acts 14:22, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Jean Calvin said, “The faithful are not logs of wood, nor have they so divested themselves of human feelings as to be unaffected by sorrow, unafraid of danger, unhurt by poverty, and untouched by hard and unbearable persecutions. Hence they experience sorrow because of evils, but it is so mitigated by faith that they never cease at the same time to rejoice. Thus sorrow does not prevent their joy, but rather gives place to it.”

Who know the joy of “grieve but rejoice?” It's believers in Christ. The first letter of Peter was addressed to those who believed in Jesus Christ. Moreover, these people were persecuted because of their faith, kicked out from their hometown and forced to stay in a foreign land. The exile and persecuted can be considered to be the most unhappy people. They were abandoned by people, but chosen by God. They were considered to be socially dead, but lived in a new life by with Jesus Christ. People treated believers as if they were dirty and rotten, but as verses 2 and 3 say, there were cleansed by the Holy Spirit. They

lost everything they had by persecution; however, they inherited that was imperishable, undefiled, and unfading in heaven.

By believing in Jesus Christ, God became my God and I became his children. Heaven became mine. If we have this assurance of salvation, we never lose joy even in a sorrowful and painful situations. We want to remind and assure ourselves how much blessings we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus. As the Lord Jesus says to his disciples in Luke 10:20 “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven,” we want to feel assured of the salvation given by Jesus Christ and keep imperishable joy in ourselves.

2. Joy of Love

Secondary, the joy that Lord Jesus gives us, in addition to “the joy of faith,” is “joy of love.” In verse 8, it says, “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.” Those who received the letter from Peter were Christians not only believe in Jesus Christ but also love Him. Unless so, they wouldn’t be persecuted or suffer from it; because of the pressure from others, they might hide their faith or “take the balance” between this world and faith. They, however, did love Jesus Christ, and had the joy of love, knowing that Jesus is with them, and that Jesus loves them and they love Jesus, too. They were full of this joy with the joy of salvation through their faith.

Originally, believing in Jesus Christ and loving Him is the same thing; but it happens that you haven’t noticed the greatness of Jesus and the love for Jesus Christ has not been grown yet, when it’s the

very beginning time of faith. Contrary to it, even though some people believe in Jesus for such a long time, it also happens that they lost the “first love” with Jesus Christ. I know the people who only emotionally love Jesus and they don’t try to figure out what Jesus truly means, and never want to learn His words. But they still say, “Oh, I love you Lord Jesus Christ.” It’s very natural to have interests toward the one you love, so if you love Jesus but not are connected to the love for the Word of God and love for the truth, it should be changed.

Most of Christians haven’t seen Jesus Christ except the original disciples of Jesus. However, that doesn’t mean they can neither believe in Jesus nor love Him. As Roman 10:17 says, “Faith comes from hearing,” we can believe in and love without sight. Even though we don’t actually see, we have the sight of faith. It almost means that we see by the ears not eyes. When you participate in the training of public speech, you may learn “to talk with sight.” According to the training, the best speech let the audience imagine the scene or character of people likewise they are seeing in fact. In that perspective, the best and only book describing Jesus Christ with sight would be the Bible. If you still not see Jesus nevertheless the Bible clearly describes Him, then you have the problem. We should read the Bible as you see, and listen to the verses as you see. We shall pray like, “We would love to meet you, and show us Jesus Christ,” and read the verses. Then the faith for Jesus Christ begins, and the love also grows. We would, after all, be filled with the joy of love, knowing He loves you and you love Him.

The early Christians “though have not seen Jesus Christ, they love Him.” “Though they weren’t seeing at the time, but believed.” This

joy was the support for their lives as the temporary residents with lots of sufferings and troubles. This experience is still the truth. A young man from the country that persecutes Christians, testified this; “People persecute Christians as they strike us so hard on the ground. We, however, the more they strike us, the higher we bounce up to where Jesus Christ is, because we are filled with joy through Him.” This is such an amazing testimony. If we have such joy, no suffering will crash us over. We rather get close to Jesus Christ. We dearly wish for being filled with the joy of love, Jesus loves us and we love Jesus Christ.

3. Joy of Hope

Thirdly, this is the joy of hope. As Christians, we have a joy for our salvation. Also, we have a joy for having fellowship of love with Lord Jesus and feel the salvation now. Moreover, we have a joy for our future salvation.

In verse 7, it says “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.” “The revelation of Jesus Christ” means that Jesus Christ comes to this world again. Now, we can not see Jesus Christ with our eyes. However, on that day, we can see Lord Jesus face to face. This is our dream as believers but it won’t end up with dream, and it will happen.

People who lived with Lord Jesus will be purified and be able to stand before the Lord. When we refine the gold, we put it into a pot and melt it so that we can remove impurities. Persecution, challenge,

and various suffering, those are not meaningless. But by those staff, the impurities are removed from our faith and character, personality and life as Christians.

The persecution that early Christians experienced was literally “trials by fire”. In fact, some people were hanged up on the cross and fired, some were poured tar and used as torchlight. However, they weren’t scared for it because they knew that there was ever-lasting joy over the suffering in this world. They kept their joy and faith because of the hope.

When I was a student in Japan, I visited a hospital for tuberculosis because there were Christians and people who are interested in Christianity. One day, I visited a Christian who has very short remaining days there with a pastor and other Christian. She was sleeping in the isolated room and many tubes were connected to her body, and she could not get up. We had a short conversation, and when we leave, she prayed “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” This is 1 Peter 1:3-5. She memorized it. And she continued, “I appreciate that Jesus Christ saved, and saving me now, and will save me in the future. I appreciate that I have been saved by faith and the power of God”. She even prayed for us, visitors. I thought I saw the heaven near us from her prayer.

If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have a definitive joy. If you love

Jesus Christ, you have a big joy. And if you are waiting for Jesus Christ, you have a powerful joy that you can overcome many sufferings. For this week, we shall walk with this joy.

(Prayer)

Dear heavenly father, we thank for the joy given by Lord Jesus. The joy given by Lord Jesus will not be diminished or disappear. It will become glory and honor on that day. Please, fill up our daily life with this joy. Please help us to keep looking at Lord Jesus with our faith. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.