

## Introduction

You may not know this about her but my wife is, well, she says she's *frugal*. Or maybe *thrifty*. The truth is she likes a deal, and by "deal" I mean buying the cheapest version of a thing possible. There are times it's great. If we go away for a few days she will find a great deal on a hotel. But often the cheapest version of a thing is not a good deal. (By the way, this intro was her idea!)

When we were first dating she would buy the cheapest sneakers she could find at one of those budget shoe stores. I noticed she was buying shoes every few months because the stitching would start to come loose or the glued-on sole would come lose. In the early 1990s cheap shoes were about fifteen or twenty bucks. I took her to a store and spent about forty bucks on a pair of Reebok sneakers for her. She balked and resisted and thought that was far too much money to spend on sneakers—except that pair of Reebok lasted her a couple years versus a couple months.

Again, she can find great deals on things like a hotel or a car rental, but sometimes the frugality goes too far. Sometimes she'll buy a knock-off brand of something and the cheap knock-off is no where near as good. Think "Dr. Thunder" by Walmart instead of the real Dr. Pepper.

There's something about a cheap knock-off that's always a bit shocking. Imagine buying some knock-off toothpaste. Aren't you trying to get crust *off* your teeth, not on? Or maybe you would like some "Unbelievable This Is Not Butter" on your toast. Or maybe on your way to the office you stop by Donkey Donuts to buy a dozen. You might have grown up wishing you could be like Specialman. When you're in the kitchen it's always good to have a box of Arm & Hatchet baking soda on hand. In 2019 Dawnae and I were in Israel and we took this shot. Who wouldn't want a hot cup of Stars & Bucks coffee right now?

You can save a few cents by buying the cheap knock-off, but there's one name brand Dawnae will not give up: Kikkoman soy sauce. She's also picky about her paper towels. She can't be cheap on that because the really cheap stuff just falls apart. Sometimes she has to have the genuine thing. A fake will reveal itself.

Faith is the same way. Real, genuine faith cannot be replaced by a cheap knock-off. Oh, there are cheap knock-offs of faith that can be hard to distinguish from the real. There is a test for determining the real, however. Real faith will stand out for it is the only thing that endures. We're in 1 Peter 1, starting in verse 6.

<sup>1</sup> Pet 1:6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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,  
<sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:6–9

## In This

Peter says in verse 6, “In this you rejoice”. In English, verses 3–12 are broken up into seven distinct sentences. In the Greek, verses 3–12 are one single sentence, indicating how connected each of these verses is. What is the “this” in which they rejoice? At the beginning of this long, convoluted sentence, Peter told them God had caused them to be born again to a living hope and to an inheritance that cannot be taken from them. This inheritance, this fullness of their salvation, is kept in a secure bank in heaven until the Lord Jesus returns.

In *this* they rejoice. In this they find great joy, despite their present suffering. In the midst of a world that holds them in contempt, that withholds friendship and business dealings, they have an identity that is firmly rooted in the Lord Jesus, that is kept in heaven far beyond the reach of those who may hate them. This identity is found in this inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. This inheritance means they belong.

In this they *rejoice*. The word for rejoice here is quite amazing. One lexicon indicates it means “to experience a state of great joy and gladness, often involving verbal expression and appropriate body movement”. The lexicon points to this word used in Acts 2:26 where it says, “my tongue rejoices”. It offers a possible translation: “I shout because I am so happy”.

However, this joy they experience is no happy-clappy denial of pain. Peter acknowledges they rejoice, *though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials*. Peter recognizes these believers have suffered and perhaps are still suffering. Their present experience of joy is not a denial of their present experience of suffering! Peter Davids put it this way:

Hope should lead to joy. The “rejoice” is not a continual feeling of hilarity nor a denial of the reality of pain and suffering, but an anticipatory joy experienced even now, despite the outward circumstances, because the believers know that their sufferings are only “for a little while” and their inheritance is sure and eternal.

Peter H. Davids, NICNT

The “little while” indicates the temporary nature of their suffering. Whether the suffering is heavy upon them or light, it is temporary. Their inheritance is eternal. This is why they rejoice. Notice Peter says “in this you rejoice”—you actually, actively rejoice. He doesn’t say, “in this you may rejoice” or “in this you have the ability to rejoice”. The expectation on Peter’s part is they actively rejoice. Again Peter Davids explains,

Peter is not giving a command here, but expressing the experience of the early church resulting from their conversion.

Peter H. Davids, NICNT

The grief is real. The pain is real. The heaviness of what they are enduring is real. Peter does not downplay this. He’s writing this letter to encourage these suffering believers and

to instruct them how to live as exiles in a world that is hostile to them, so as to faithfully live out the mission of God in their sphere of influence. To enable them to live faithfully, he begins this letter by rooting them in the present reality of eternal life. They are, right now, experiencing eternal life for the Lord is present and active in their midst. This is seen, in part, by their present joy in the midst of sorrow.

This joy is part of the inheritance believers receive. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has caused them to be born again to a living hope and to an inheritance that cannot be taken from them. This produces joy that is above and beyond their present circumstances, for this joy is a gift from the Lord himself.

## More Precious Than Gold

One thing is clear throughout Scripture: pain and suffering come from the fall, not from God's good world. Sin brought death and ruin into God's good world and ever since there has been pain and suffering. This pain and suffering is not pointless, however. God is at work in it. Peter tells them they rejoice even though they may suffer for a little while, and then adds, "if necessary". Why would it be *necessary*?

He says in verse 7 this grief stemming from their various trials has this purpose: "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 various trials have an incredible outcome: their faith is tested by these trials and proven genuine. Faith perseveres and endures. It is only through such trials that faith is tested and proven genuine. Think of Jesus' parable about the seed that was sown.

In Matthew 13 he taught a large crowd. He told them a sower—a farmer—went out to plant. In those days seed was scattered by hand as you walked through a field. In the parable he said some seeds fell along the path and the birds came and ate those seeds before they could germinate. Some seeds fell on rocky ground and quickly sprang up but when the sun became hot they were scorched; their roots were simply too shallow to endure the heat. Some seeds fell among thorns and the thorns quickly choked them out and the plants died. Still other seeds fell on good soil and grew to produce grain. Jesus then explained the parable to them.

Mt 13:18 "Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Matthew 13:18–23

The seeds were all the same seeds. That is, the gospel proclaimed is the same gospel. To use Paul's metaphor, to some the aroma of Christ is the stench of death but to others the aroma of Christ is the scent of life. The aroma is the same! So it is with the gospel proclaimed. Some never seem to hear it. The "birds" have snatched it away before it can even begin sprouting. Some seem to hear it but when the cares of this world come or when difficulties come, they reveal they were never going to bear fruit. Only those who endure through suffering are those who truly believe the gospel.

The thing that proves the soil is good is difficulty. It is only the heat of the sun or the weeds that threaten to overcome you that prove whether your faith is genuine. Only the plants that endure and persevere are true. Peter says the *tested genuineness of your faith* is the faith that endures through the heat of the sun and remains steadfast in the midst of weeds that are trying to out-compete you for nutrients.

Notice again Peter's confident assertion: "In this you rejoice". Yes, you're going through difficulties yet these difficulties are revealing something profound: the seed of the gospel has fallen on good soil in your hearts, and this is why you continue to rejoice in the midst of your various trials. The trials are not evidence of a lack of faith, but proof of their faith! Karen Jobes put it this way:

Peter does not wish his readers to confuse the testing of their faith with the failure of their faith or to think that their distress implies they have inadequate faith.

Karen H. Jobes, BECNT

Not at all! The incredible outcome of their trials is they demonstrate that genuine faith is far more valuable than gold! Gold, he says, is purified with fire, yet gold will perish. Think of what gold is equivalent to on the new earth. Have you ever seen anyone with a large hunk of asphalt mounted in a ring? Ever see someone with a chain around the neck hanging a hunk of asphalt? No! What is the ultimate fate of gold when the Lord returns? John says he sees the roads on the new earth paved with gold. On that day gold is just *asphalt*.

*In this life* their genuine faith proved by their joy in the midst of suffering is more valuable than gold. To say this another way, there is nothing greater for them in this life than genuine faith. He's offering them something greater than a life of ease and of prosperity and even of security. If someone were to steal your car but left a million dollars in its place, is it a bad thing that your car was stolen? Yes. It is. Theft is always a bad thing. Is a million dollars of far greater worth than your car? Yes. That doesn't eliminate the sting of being violated by having your car stolen, but it offers a different perspective on your present distress, doesn't it?

Genuine faith in the Lord is the greatest blessing we receive in this life. This is because of the outcome of our genuine faith, for this faith that is proved genuine will "be found to result in praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ". All their suffering and pain will ultimately result in the Lord Jesus being honored when their faith is proved genuine.

## Genuine Faith

Faith is the thing that honors the Lord. Throughout history what he has desired from those he created in his image is that they trust him. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden he gave them one simple rule. There was one tree out of countless trees in the garden they must not eat from, and their refusal to eat from this tree would be an act of faith. Other than the warning they would die if they ate from the tree, and they had no real notion of what death was at that time, God gave them almost no other indications of what would happen. They were to trust him. They did not.

Faith is often misunderstood to mean something like wishful thinking. This stems from the truth that faith often is without sight, but faith is not without *evidence*. There may not be evidence in a particular act of faith, but there is still sufficient evidence for a person's faith in any given situation.

Take Abraham as an example. God made a covenant with Abraham that through his son born to his wife he would bless the entire world. His son, born to Sarah, was essential to the covenant being fulfilled. If Abraham doesn't have this son, God's promises would certainly fail. If his son doesn't grow up to have a son, God's promises would certainly fail. Then one day before his son was fully grown, God told Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice. The author of Hebrews explains.

Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."<sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Hebrews 11:17–19

Abraham obeyed the Lord and proceeded to offer his son as a sacrifice. Isaac was not married. He had no offspring. If he dies the promises of God die as well. In faith Abraham proceeded to sacrifice his son. Notice why: he considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead. Abraham's faith is on display here. He had never heard of anyone being raised from the dead. He did not fully comprehend God's power, or God's plan. God ultimately prevented him from killing Isaac, and gave him a ram to sacrifice instead. Abraham was willing to move forward in faith without knowing how this would all turn out.

Hear me: this was not blind faith. It was blind in the moment, for he could not see a way out, supposing that maybe? Perhaps? It might be possible? If I do this, might God be able to raise Isaac from the dead? Abraham had sufficient evidence on which to base his faith, even though in this particular act of faith he could not see. Just a few verses before this in Hebrews 11 we see what this evidence was.

Heb 11:11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.<sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

Hebrews 11:11–12

Sarah was past the age for bearing children. God fulfilled his promise and in her old age she conceived and had a son with her husband, whom the author of Hebrews describes as “as good as dead”. They were *old*. Abraham experienced this miracle and trusted the Lord. Years later God appeared to him and called him to do the unthinkable, the thing that could undo all the promises, the covenant made with Abraham. Abraham saw no way out yet based on the evidence—God’s faithfulness to give his wife a son—he wondered if such a God were able to raise the dead.

Do you see the faith in this? He didn’t wonder if God would stop him from killing Isaac. He didn’t wonder if God had a different plan that did not involve Isaac’s death. When Abraham took him up that mountain his plan was faithful obedience even though he could not see how this would all turn out. In this sense, his faith was blind, but it was not without evidence. That God could give a woman past childbearing age a child is evidence that perhaps he could perform yet another miracle by giving life to another “lifeless” body!

The kind of faith the Bible describes is not wishful thinking. It is taking what one knows to be true of God and applying that knowledge to a given situation in which that person does not have all the facts. Today we *know* God can raise the dead for he has raised Jesus from the dead. This is the evidence on which our faith rests. Notice what Peter says in verse 8.

He tells his readers though they have not seen Jesus, they love him. When they heard the gospel they had never laid eyes on Jesus, yet they believed in him. He says further that though they do not *now* see him, they believe in him *and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory*. This is the very sort of faith Jesus himself talked about. After his resurrection the apostle Thomas declared he wouldn’t believe Jesus was risen from the dead unless he could put his fingers in the holes made by the nails through his wrists and put his finger in the hole in his side from the spear. Then Jesus himself showed up.

Jn 20:26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”<sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John 20:26–29

Jesus is talking about all those who would believe through the message of the apostles, the very eyewitnesses of his resurrection. The tested genuineness of their faith will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This is not blind faith! The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead and is Lord of all. They heard this message, they saw the evidence in the eyewitness accounts of the apostles, and they believed. Jesus himself declares their faith blesses them. Peter says this blessing will culminate when Jesus is revealed at his second coming.

Faith is what God desires from us. As I’ve said before, faith is the only currency God accepts. Any good works we engage in to please him are only acceptable if they’re given *in faith*. If we engage in good works in order to impress God or to gain something from him,

this isn't faith. It isn't given in a currency he accepts. If you try to offer something to God, whether worship or praise or honor, *anything*, and it isn't offered in faith, it isn't acceptable to God. Your "money" is no good.

Given their suffering for the sake of the gospel, it's clear Peter's audience had little to offer—well, little to offer other than faith, which is the very thing the Lord desired from them!

## The Outcome

Because faith is the very thing God desires, and because they demonstrate this faith in their joy and their faithfulness, they will obtain the outcome of their faith, which is the salvation of their souls. This is why the tested genuineness of their faith is more precious than gold. Gold cannot purchase salvation. Gold is not a currency God accepts. Gold is as valuable to God as asphalt is. Faith results in their salvation. This faith produces joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, Peter says.

The irony here is rich. Faith is their response to the truth of God in Christ. Faith is what led to their faithfulness to Jesus and therefore their rejection of the idols around them. This rejection is what resulted in being hated by those around them. Faith is both the cause of their salvation and the cause of their suffering. Karen Jobes explains.

For, by virtue of being chosen to respond in faith to the gospel (1:1–3), one is at the same time necessarily alienated from the priorities and values of unbelieving society, which inevitably results in various types of suffering. Just as physical birth bestows citizenship based on that of one's parent, Christians have been given new birth by the divine Father bestowing on them a new citizenship and inheritance in the kingdom of God. This new identity and allegiance make them to some extent aliens within society. ...While their faithfulness to God may be why they are not receiving any praise, glory, or honor from their society, that same faithfulness will ultimately result in praise, glory, and honor when all is said and done. Therefore, the very experiences that cause them distress because they are Christians should also cause them joy because they are Christians. They rejoice with a joy that is beyond words and that has been glorified even by the dark circumstances in which they possess it.

Karen H. Jobes, BECNT

Real faith, genuine faith, is not revealed by a trouble-free life. Genuine faith is revealed *through* trouble, *through* hardship, *through* difficulties, *through* pain. This is how we can tell genuine faith. It's so natural for us to want to look at pain and suffering and think if only our faith were greater we wouldn't be suffering as we are. That is not the measure of faith!

The measure of genuine faith is Peter's confident expectation that they are, right now, rejoicing in the midst of their suffering. In the midst of the difficulty they rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. Genuine faith is an enduring faith that perseveres, trusting God every step of the way even when the way forward is unseen.

There are no knock-offs of true faith. There is an imitation faith that can be had at a greatly reduced cost, but it's not genuine faith. Cultural Christianity is a plague for it

does not require a life of faithful obedience. So long as the outward appearance is right, this false faith is good enough. If you look like you have everything together and can put hashtag-blessed on your social media profile, all is good.

If you don't struggle with sin and if you hang out with the right people and if you listen to the right music and if you say the right things at the right times, who knows if your faith is real? Peter says God allows various trials to grieve us, that our faith may be proven genuine. This tested and proven faith is more precious than gold. Though this world may speak evil of us, our genuine faith will one day result in praise and glory and honor when the Lord Jesus is revealed at his coming.

Remember how Peter started this letter with doxology: blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To bless is to speak well of. God is spoken well of. Our words praise God and honor him, simply because he is worthy of praise and honor and worship. The only reason you and I know he is worthy of such worship is because in his mercy he has revealed himself to us. He has opened our eyes to see him—not our physical eyes but with our faith. Because we see him through faith we respond to him by loving him and rejoicing with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Genuine faith blesses God. Genuine faith speaks well of God. Genuine faith declares that God is worthy of our trust. Genuine faith declares God is worthy of our devotion. Genuine faith declares God is worthy of our praise. Genuine faith declares this is true even in the midst of present suffering! Genuine faith results in his glory, and genuine faith results in our good, for a proven, genuine faith is of greater value than gold or riches.

Here's the thing. If you start with your suffering, you will have an incredibly difficult time working your way back to God. If you focus first on your difficulties and then try to figure out how God is good in your difficulties, you're gonna have a very hard time making that connection. None of us is smart enough to do that. If you start with what you know is true of God, however, you can see his goodness even in the midst of your present trials that grieve you. If you start with faith, with what you know is true of God, you will always end up with the goodness of God, regardless of your present circumstances.

The outcome of such faith is the salvation of their souls. The fullness of eternal life is the gift of God promised them in Christ, and he has given all the evidence necessary for us to believe him when he raised Jesus from the dead. You and I do not need to speculate, to wonder if it were possible for God to do such a thing, for he has done such a thing. That is the evidence on which our faith is based.

Whatever your present trials, whatever your present grief and suffering, God is at work in you, testing your faith, proving it true. This is more precious than gold. If your present trial is health, God is at work in you. If your present trial is financial difficulty, God is at work in you. If your present trial is relational difficulty, God is at work in you. If your present trial is loved ones making really bad choices, God is at work in you. By rejoicing in the truth of who you are in Christ, you are demonstrating your faith in God is warranted. You demonstrate the truth of the gospel. You demonstrate God is worthy of such worship.

I'm struck by the fact his letter is written to the *elect exiles* in Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia. It isn't addressed to Phoebe or Diogenes or Demetrius or Prisca. It is addressed to communities of faith. These elect exiles are suffering *together* as a group because they are bearing one another's burdens.

They are helping Phoebe with her mortgage payment and watching Demetrius' young



son while he is at work and providing meals to Diogenes and Prisca since they are elderly and housebound and their only son has broken ties with them. Even more than their physical needs being taken care of, Peter is reminding them of their responsibilities to each other, to help one another press in to Jesus and this new life of faith when they are tempted to give up or to give in or to simply walk away.

These elect exiles are not going to make it alone. They need each other. Yes, right now they do not see Jesus, but Jesus sees them and has provided a way for them to know he is present in their midst—not in his physical body but in the body that is the church. The way in which they do this is by rejoicing together in the Lord's goodness, even in the midst of their various trials.

All of the *yous* in this text are plural. In this *y'all* rejoice, even though *y'all* are grieved by various trials. Though *y'all* haven't seen him, *y'all* love him. Church, let's rejoice together, knowing the one in whom we trust, for we have all the evidence we need that he is trustworthy. Because he is trustworthy even in the midst of various trials, he is worthy of praise. Let's rejoice *together*. Let's let our present difficulties prove the genuineness of our faith, for genuine faith is worth more than gold. Through genuine faith we get Jesus.