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## A BETTER RESISTANCE | AN INEXPRESSIBLE JOY (3)

January 31, 2021

1 Peter 1:6-12

*<sup>6</sup> 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.*

*<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, <sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

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### BACKGROUND

It is natural for Christians to associate God's love for them with keeping them from trials and suffering. For parents, this is what they would often wish for their own children. Yet that is not what we see in the passage or in the experience of Christians throughout history. Peter insists that Christians can suffer various trials to the benefit of their faith and to the glory of God. Such sufferings can strengthen faith, produce hope in God, and help them to take hold of what he has promised to them. In verses 10-12, Peter tells us that even the Old Testament prophets did not see clearly as Christians see today how Jesus' own suffering accomplish such great blessings for those who trust in him. By fixing their gaze on him, Christians can experience their trials as temporary and necessary circumstances that can lead to a more genuine and joy-filled faith in God.

### PURPOSE

To encourage Christians to trust God amidst trials by fixing their eyes on Jesus

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We often view suffering as an impediment to joy, but Peter insists that trials can result in "inexpressible joy." How is that possible? How can trials and hardship deepen our faith?
2. How can Jesus' suffering inform Christians about how they can face their own suffering?
3. How might this passage apply to us during this time of COVID? How have your present trials shaped your faith?

## LEADER'S NOTES

**Question 1:** The purpose of this question is to help the group to see the “preciousness of faith” which allows us to receive the benefits of Christ.

If this world is all that there is, then suffering should be avoided at all costs. But the Scriptures tell us that human beings were created to know God and to dwell with him. Therefore, the whole of our earthly lives is only a part of our story. And God who is all-knowing, all-powerful and perfectly good, can use trials to achieve his purposes on earth (which are often hidden from us) and to point us towards future salvation. Suffering call also strengthen our faith by removing impurities from it (verse 7). Gold only becomes pure through a refiner’s fire. In the same way, faith can only be proven through trials.

This means that God can use trials to loosen our grip on merely earthly hope (wealth, comfort, possessions) and strengthen our grip on the hope that is to come (life in the presence of God, freedom from sin, the restoration of our bodies and God’s creation from bondage and decay). Hebrews 12:2 tells us that it was “for the joy that was set before him” that allowed Jesus to endure the cross and despise its shame.

Also, the Westminster Shorter Catechism gives a helpful, biblical definition of faith in Jesus. It says that faith is “a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus along for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.” Trials can help us to experience a faith that produces inexpressible joy.

**Question 2:** The purpose of this question is to point the group to the way that Jesus’ suffering ultimately resulted in glory. For those who were in Jerusalem and witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion firsthand, they could never have imagined or understood at the time how God could use such suffering and injustice to bring about so much ultimate good. Yet, on the other side of history, Christians can now understand what God has accomplished through Jesus, so much so, that even angels marvel at such wisdom and love (v.12). To follow in Jesus’ footsteps is to participate in his life and his suffering, so that we might also share in his glory.

**Question 3:** The purpose of this question is to help identify the struggles that the group has experienced over the past year and to share them with one another. Galatians 6:2 encourages Christians to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” One of the ways that we do this is by honestly admitting our struggles to one another so that we might not face them alone.