

Text: 1 Pt 1.8-9

We come to the next unfolding of Peter's long sentence from 1 Pt 1.3 through 1.Pt 1.12. Let's read the text and then give a quick summary.

Read 1 Pt 1.3-12, text 8-9

Peter begins by blessing God who saves us (3a)

1. Our new birth results in a living hope, an imperishable inheritance, and ultimate salvation (3b-5)
2. We rejoice greatly in this, though under trial, so that our tested faith will result in praise and glory and honor to Jesus Christ (6-7)

When Jesus comes, the fact of our salvation, proved pure through trials, will bring glory to him (because he will glorify us, who were sinners).

The fact, however, that Jesus isn't physically present among us, makes that tested faith all the more precious. That is what our text focuses on today.

I. Not seen, yet loved (8a)

"The strongest attachments which have ever existed on earth have been for this unseen Saviour. There has been a love for him stronger than that for a father, or mother, or wife, or sister, or home, or country. It has been so strong, that thousands have been willing, on account of it, to bear the torture of the rack or the stake. It has been so strong, that thousands of youth of the finest minds, and the most flattering prospects of distinction, have been willing to leave the comforts of a civilized land, and to go among the benighted heathen, to tell them the story of a Saviour's life and death. It has been so strong, that unnumbered multitudes have longed, more than they have for all other things, that they might see him, and be with him, and abide with him for ever and ever."¹

A. The one you have not seen

1. The language points back to Jesus in v. 7

¹ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: James to Jude*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 118.

2. The tense suggests a distinction between Peter and his readers
 - a. He has seen the Lord
 - b. We have not
- B. The equality of experience
 1. The verb “you love” is present tense
 2. With Peter, we love Him — there is an equality in our faith
- C. The reason for the equality
 1. We accept the testimony of the apostles

How many hands has it passed through to get to us?
 2. That acceptance (faith) involves a personal acquaintance better than physical presence
 - a. The word “to love” presupposes a personal acquaintance
 - b. The mechanics of salvation produce this personal acquaintance, see Rm 5.5

Rm 5.5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
 - c. When you believe, you receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit immediately
3. One commentator gives us the four stages of how men apprehend (or see) Jesus Christ
 - a. The stage of hope or desire, brought on by the prophets and kings who desired to see
 - b. The stage of physical sight (eyewitness), the era of the incarnation and the apostles
 - c. The stage of faith, the stage that supersedes Thomas, the millions who love having not seen

Jn 20.29 Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed.”

- d. The stage of the “beatific vision” — where faith becomes sight in the new heaven and the new earth²

¹ Jn 3.2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Spurgeon: “It is a mistake, a great mistake—as I think a moment’s reflection would show you—to conceive that contact with Jesus through the senses would produce faith. Mark the fact that out of the mass who did see Jesus and who did hear Him, few, very few believed. The crowd that gathered round the crucifixion, which might seem to be the most moving scene in the story, were not bettered by what they saw. As the multitude gazed, instead of tears they yielded laughter. Instead of penitence they exhibited blasphemy. There they gathered, thousands of them of all sorts, the highest and the lowest, the intelligent and the uneducated, and all alike they spat the venom of their hatred upon the Crucified One.”³

II. Not seeing, yet believing (8b)

A. In this description, both participle and verb are active

1. Peter joins with us in this phrase: “not seeing, but believing”
2. This is an ongoing commitment of people of faith

Napoleon supposedly said, “An extraordinary power of influencing and commanding men has been given to Alexander, Charlemagne, and myself. But with us the presence has been necessary, the eye, the voice, the hand. Whereas Jesus Christ has influenced and commanded His subjects without His visible bodily presence for eighteen hundred years.”⁴

² Edward Gordon Selwyn, ed., *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan & co. Ltd, 1946), 131.

³ Charles H Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Pt 1.8.

⁴ Cited in Selwyn, *1 Peter*, 131.

B. The fruit of faith is great joy

1. The same word as we had in v. 6: “jubilation”
2. The joy is inexpressible: more than we can say
 - a. “words cannot do it justice.”⁵
 - b. “a taste of heaven”⁶

“You cannot explain to a person who has never tasted honey how sweet it is. Neither can you explain to a man who does not know the joy of the Lord how joyous a thing it is. He could not comprehend what your words meant; you would be talking to him in an altogether unknown tongue.”⁷

3. Joy “full of glory”

“The perfect passive participle pictures Christian joy as suffused with glory that is yet to come (v. 7). As such, it can only be described in the language of the perfect life to come. That explains why the joy is unspeakable.”⁸

III. Not having, yet possessing (9)

A. Gaining a prize

1. The word “obtaining” is used by Plato to describe someone taking a prize in the Olympic games⁹
2. Selwyn gives the def. “carry off for oneself”

B. This “getting” is the outcome of faith

1. The “getting” looks far forward — the salvation of your souls
2. “Souls” refers not to the inner man alone, but the whole man

⁵ Picirilli, *1 and 2 Peter*, 116.

⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 70.

⁷ Spurgeon, *1 Peter*, 1 Pt 1.8.

⁸ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 70.

⁹ Selwyn, *1 Peter*, 132.

3. When our souls get the whole salvation, our bodies will be raised, we will join Christ, and “ever be with our Lord”
4. However... “obtaining” is present tense
5. We have salvation right now: we have the outcome of our faith right now (though not the full form as yet)

Not having, yet possessing

Conclusion:

As we consider this salvation Jesus wrought for us, we find that his work gives us the new birth:

- The living hope
- The imperishable inheritance
- The ultimate salvation

In this, we greatly rejoice, despite our sufferings, which perfects our faith while we wait for him, who we have not seen, but love, in whom, believing, we greatly rejoice, because we have the sure reality of our complete salvation — though we do not see it yet.