

“I Set My Hope on Jesus”

(1 Peter 1:3-9)

Introduction

- In recent years, it has become common (even vogue) for professing Christians to declare that they are “deconstructing” their Christian faith. This movement, known as “faith deconstruction” (or religious deconstruction), has gained notable popularity since 2016. It describes any degree of reexamining, questioning, or renouncing one’s faith. Such Christian deconstructionists can even be called “exvangelicals”, a term used to describe their “de-converting” from the Christian faith (religion). While some “deconstructionists” (“exvangelicals”) are militant in their apostasy and flagrant in their immorality, the “crisis of faith” for other Christians is oftentimes the result of spiritual abuse or painful trials.
- Unfortunately, doubting one’s faith – for whatever reason and to whatever degree – can be a real part of the Christian’s life. I’m sure we all would like to have an ever growing/maturing faith in Christ that is uninterrupted, unwavering, and never waning. To be sure, this would be our hope and prayer. We all would love to have a resilient faith that is impervious to uncertainties and fears. We all would love to have great faith (instead of little faith) and strong faith (instead of weak faith).

But we are sometimes fickle and fragile people – “prone to wander” (hymn: Come Thou Fount) – and “*the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*” [1Pet.5:8; “devour” (*katapinō*), “swallow” (Matt.23:24; 1Cor.15:54), “overwhelmed” (2Cor.2:7), “drowned” (Heb.11:29)]. Whether real or imagined, just or unjust, our sufferings can cause us to doubt God or doubt our faith in God. Satan wants to “deconstruct” (disassemble/demolish) our faith in God. He wants to destroy our Christian lives. We have to be aware of this so that we can prayerfully guard our faith (1Cor.16:13; Eph.6:16)

This was true even of Jesus’ apostles and disciples in the New Testament. He often rebuked them for having “*little faith*” (Matt.6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).

Mark 9:19-28 ~ “And [Jesus] answered them, ‘O faithless [*apistos*] generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.’ ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹And Jesus asked his father, ‘How long has this been happening to him?’ And he said, ‘From childhood. ²²And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ ²³And Jesus said to him, ‘If you can!’ All things are possible for one who believes [*pisteuō*].’ ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe [*pisteuō*]; help my unbelief [*apistia*]!’ ²⁵And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.’ ²⁶And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, ‘He is dead.’ ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.”

- The cry from the father of the demon-possessed boy, ought to be the prayer of every Christian: “*I believe; help my unbelief!*” Clearly, this father had faith, but his faith is mixed with or eclipsed by his doubt (“*if you can*”, vs.22). The father’s declaration (“*I believe; help my unbelief!*”, vs.24) not only revealed his lack of faith but also his want of (more) faith. Unlike so many of the religious leaders who rejected Christ outright, this father did believe in Jesus. But, at this moment in time, his faith was not strong enough to believe or trust that Christ could heal his demon-possessed son.

By simple definition, faith is believing and trusting in God. A helpful distinction can be made that “saving faith” is believing in God, and “trusting faith” is believing God. The reality is a person can have a true (strong) saving faith and yet struggle with trusting God – their believe in God is unwavering, but their trust in God can be small or frail. The clouds of doubt can obscure our faith, and none of us are immune to struggling with our faith or in our faithfulness to God.

- This brings us to the song I have chosen for the theme of the sermon this morning. As you may be aware, we are currently in the midst of our “Summer Sermon Series: Sing to the LORD”, where we are preaching a verse/passage of Scripture using the lyric from a biblical worship song as our theme. The song for this morning – written in 2023 by Keith Getty, Matt Boswell, Matt Papa – is titled “I Set My Hope on Jesus (Hymn for a Deconstructing Friend).”

In discussing their writing of this hymn, they described this song as “for the doubters, the skeptics, the hurting.” They wrote this song to be “raw and honest about our struggles” (that we all can be tempted to wander into doubt or disbelief), and to point us back to Jesus – upon whom our hope rests.

When this life of trials tests my faith / I set my hope on Jesus

When the questions come and doubts remain / I set my hope on Jesus

For the deepest wounds that time won’t heal / There’s a joy that runs still deeper

There’s a truth that’s more than all I feel / I set my hope on Jesus

I set my hope on Jesus / My rock, my only trust

Who set His heart upon me first / I set my hope on Jesus

Though I falter in this war with sin / I set my hope on Jesus

When I fail the fight and sink within / I set my hope on Jesus

Though the shame would drown me in its sea / And I dread the waves of justice

I will cast my life on Calvary / I set my hope on Jesus

I set my hope on Jesus / My rock, my only trust

Who set His heart upon me first / I set my hope on Jesus

Though the world call me to leave my Lord / I set my hope on Jesus

Though it offer all its vain rewards / I set my hope on Jesus

Though this heart of mine is prone to stray / Give me grace enough to finish

’Till I worship on that final day / I set my hope on Jesus

I set my hope on Jesus / My rock, my only trust

Who set His heart upon me first / I set my hope on Jesus

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- This song has led me to preach from 1 Peter 1:3-9. The apostle Peter wrote this “letter” to Christians who were “*elect exiles of the Dispersion*” (1:1), which meant (among other things) that they were no strangers to the trials and sufferings of the Christian life (see 1:6; 2:12, 19-21; 3:9, 13-18; 4:1, 12-16, 19). After a brief (yet doctrinally filled) introduction, Peter launched into this glorious benediction:

1 Peter 1:3-9 ~ “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, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so 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. ⁸Though 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, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

- Writing to Christians who were suffering for their faith in Christ, or who’s faith in Christ would likely be tested with suffering, Peter wrote to encourage them to set their hope on Jesus. In this entire passage, there is not a single command (imperative verb). This passage can be divided into two major themes.

A. The root of salvation in Jesus Christ (vs.3-5)

- God alone deserves glory and praise for our salvation – a salvation that is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in “*our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs.3) alone! This is to what Peter was referring when he wrote: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*” (vs.3). This is a declaration of praise to God. Literally, the expression could be translated “Blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” [there is no verb “be” in the original Greek text].

1 Cor 1:28-31 ~ “God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

Eph 2:8-9 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (see Rom.3:27-28; Tit.3:5; 2Tim.1:9)

Gal 6:14 ~ “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

- God alone is deserving of all praise and glory for our salvation, because He is the one who sovereignly initiates and ordains salvation. God is the author, perfecter and protector of salvation. Salvation is not the result of any human achievement, but of divine accomplishment. God alone is to be praised for our salvation because He alone can raise the dead sinner to spiritual life; He alone can empower the godless (unrighteous) to live godly (righteously); He alone can give wisdom to the foolish; He alone can reconcile those at enmity with Him; and He alone receives the blessing for those whom He has saved.
- Peter then, in verses three through five, described four distinct aspects of God’s salvation.

1. The source of our salvation (vs.3)

- In verse three, Peter reenforced the truth that God’s salvation is by “grace alone” in terms of God’s “*great mercy*” (vs.3; *polys eleos*). The well of God’s abundant mercy never runs dry for the true follower of Christ; it is never out-of-stock; never in short supply.

With regard to salvation, grace and mercy are two sides of the same coin: grace is getting what we do not deserve (i.e., salvation), and mercy is not getting what we do deserve (i.e., condemnation). Salvation is by divine accomplishment, not by human achievement.

- Salvation is “*According to [God’s] great mercy*” (vs.3), as He sovereignly “*caused us to be born again*” (vs.3; *anagennaō*; “has begotten us”, also 1Pet.1:23). This is the doctrine of regeneration – at the moment of their conversion to Christ, believers are reborn in Christ (see Jn.3:1-16). This is not a superficial change, but a radical transformation (2Cor.5:17; Gal.6:15). Once a person truly receives Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, they are fundamentally and eternally new – new desires, affections, allegiances, commitments, purpose, passions, relationships, priorities, and a new destiny! They – who were “*dead in the trespasses and sins*” have been “*made ... alive*” in Christ (Eph.2:1, 5). To be “*born again*” is to be truly and eternally saved, and this is “*caused*” by God alone.

John 1:12-13 ~ “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

John 3:3 ~ “Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born [*gennaō*] again [*anōthen*] he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

Titus 3:4-6 ~ “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy [*eleos*], by the washing of regeneration [*palingenesia*] and renewal [*anakainōsis*] of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”

Eph 2:1-5 ~ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with [syzyōpoieō] Christ – by grace you have been saved”

- Biblically, “*hope*” (*elpis/elpizō*) is not fingers-crossed wishful thinking, but the confident assurance in something not yet received (see Tit.2:13; Col.1:5). Hope and faith/trust are distinct but closely related in Scripture. For true hope is trusting in the character and promises of God.

1 Peter 1:13 ~ “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope [elpizō] fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 1:21 ~ “who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope [elpis] are in God.”

Rom 8:24 ~ “... Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?”

- There are three kinds of hope in this world. First, there are those who have “*no hope*” (Eph.2:12; 1Thess.4:13). Second, there are those who have a false hope (Matt.7:21-23; Jn.5:45). Third, there are those who have a true hope or “*living hope*” (1Pet.1:3; Tit.1:2). All hope apart from Christ, that is not ultimately in Christ, is dead hope.

The Christian’s hope is “*living*” (*zaō*) in the sense that it is neither empty (false) nor inactive (dormant). It will never fail, never falter, never die. It is true, certain, lasting, and operative – actively working in our lives. The Christian’s hope is alive (or lively) for it comes from God, through salvation in Christ. It rests not human or religious merit (Gal.2:16) but in the nature and character of God – on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Heb 6:19 ~ “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain”

2. The means of our salvation (vs.3)

- The means of our salvation is “*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (vs.3) was the final step in paying for, securing, our salvation. This statement includes Jesus’ sinless life, and His substitutionary death on the cross. Without the resurrection, there would be no forgiveness of sins, no new life, no living hope, no salvation

1 Cor 15:14, 17-19 ~ “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ... ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

Rom 5:10 ~ “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

John 11:25-26 ~ “Jesus said to [Martha], ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

- It is only because Christ rose from the dead – “*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (vs.3) – that we have the guarantee of salvation (complete forgiveness of sins). Since Christ indeed rose from the dead, true Christians have the “*living hope*” of being saved and secured in Christ forever (see Rom.6:4, 11; Eph.2:6; Col.3:1-3).

3. The nature of our salvation (vs.4)

- The believer's salvation is also referred to here as "*an inheritance*" (*kleronomia*; vs.4). As in our English vernacular, an inheritance refers to something that is passed down from one family member to another (typically, a parent/grandparent to a child/grandchild). In our day – with the epidemic of divorce, the dismantling of family, and the idolatry of materialism – the practical concept of inheritance is almost lost. Thinking generationally – leaving an inheritance to our children's children (Prov.13:22) – is mostly a forgotten vestige of ancient times.
- In Biblical times, however, the concept of inheritance was a common and anticipated practice. The New Testament reveals that the children of God will receive an inheritance from God as they are part of His heavenly kingdom (see Gal.3:18; Eph.1:14, 18; 5:5; Col.3:24; Heb.9:15).

Rom 8:15-17 ~ "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

Gal 3:29 ~ "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

- Peter describes this inheritance using three qualitative terms: "*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading*" (vs.4a).

"imperishable" (*aphthartos*) – This word can literally be translated incorruptible or even immortal. In other words, the believer's inheritance is not subject to decay or death; it will not be worn out with the passage of time or deteriorated in any way. All earthly possessions will ultimately decay and be destroyed, but not the spiritual inheritance the believer has in the kingdom of God. It is permanent.

"undefiled" (*amiantos*) – Not only is this inheritance eternal ("*imperishable*"), it is also eternally pure ("*undefiled*"). It is incorruptible, unpolluted and unstained by sin or any impurity. The inheritance (salvation) that God gives to His children is not only permanent, it is pure.

"unfading" (*amarantos*) – In addition, the believer's inheritance will never fade or weaken in any way. It is impervious to change; it will not depreciate over time, nor will it ever dim or be diminished. Our salvation is not only permanent and pure, it is perfect.

- True Christians will receive an inheritance from God because they – being born again – are children of God. This "inheritance" is synonymous with salvation – "*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven*" (Col.1:5). Christians are children of God, and heirs of His spiritual and eternal kingdom.

4. The security of our salvation (vs.4-5)

- The security of our salvation is the objective reality of being saved (i.e., whether a person is saved or not). The assurance of our salvation is the subjective reality of being saved (i.e., whether a person believes/feels they are saved or not). As it is possible to have the security of salvation without the assurance of salvation (e.g., bad teaching, doubt, emotionalism), it is also possible to have a false assurance of salvation and no security of salvation. Consequently, there are those who believe that no one can ever know for sure whether or not they are saved. But the Bible rejects such a notion (see Jn.6:37-40; 10:27-29; Phil.1:6; 2Tim.1:12; 1Jn.2:19; 5:13; Jd.24-25).

In 1 Peter 1:4-5, we read that not only is the believer's inheritance secure in Christ but the believer is also secure in Christ.

a. The security of the inheritance (vs.4)

The reason why our "*inheritance*" (salvation) is eternally secure is because it is "*kept in heaven*" (vs.4). The Greek word translated "*kept*" (*tereo*; perfect passive participle) indicates a completed past activity that continues to bear present results. God Himself has "stored up", "reserved" or "guarded" this inheritance "*in heaven*" (vs.4) for His children. Not only will

this inheritance not change (“imperishable, undefiled, and unfading”), it cannot be stolen or destroyed (“kept”). Heaven is the securest place in all the universe, and God is the greatest watchman!

b. The security of the heir (vs.5)

God has not only kept (is keeping) salvation in heaven for His children, but He is also guarding them as His children: “*who by God's power are being guarded*” (vs.5). “[G]uarded” (*phroureo*) means to keep safe, to protect, and was frequently used in a military context. God is the one who is continually guarding His children, and He is doing so with nothing less than His omnipotence (“God’s power”; vs.5). As the “*who*” would indicate, Peter is stating that those who are saved are the ones who are being guarded by God’s “*power*” (*dynamis*). So, God is not only keeping the believer’s salvation but guarding those whom He has saved.

John 10:27-30 ~ “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

Jude 24 ~ “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy”

It is important to note that God’s power to protect our salvation is not working autonomously. Rather, Christians are “*by God's power ... being guarded through faith*” (vs.5). God is working through the faith of all who believe in Him. In other words, those who are truly saved will persevere in their faith as God strengthens and sustains their faith in Him. This will all be fully and finally “*revealed in the last time*” (vs.5).

1 John 2:19 ~ “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”

Phil 1:6 ~ “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

B. The fruit of salvation in Jesus Christ (vs.6-9)

➤ One of the best indicators of true salvation is joy. The Good News of our salvation in Christ should cause us to “*rejoice*” (vs.6). The Greek word (*agalliaō*; 1:8; 4:13) translated “*rejoice*” is an intense, expressive term that means to be supremely and abundantly happy – a happiness that is not tentative nor based on circumstances or superficial feelings. This joy is not based on external circumstances or worldly experiences, and it is not always displayed with laughter and smiles. It is the internal and spiritual reality of being saved.

To receive God’s infinite mercy – to be completely and eternally forgiven of all sin – is cause for much rejoicing. Through His sinless life, His substitutionary death, and His supernatural resurrection, Jesus has made a way for us to be right with God and to be spared God’s just wrath. Through Christ, we can know God as our Redeemer and Father.

1 Peter 1:8-9 ~ “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice [*agalliaō*] with joy [*chara*] that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Rom 5:2 ~ “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice [*kauchaomai*] in hope of the glory of God.”

➤ The truth is, nothing we go through in this life – no pain, no sorrow, no trial – can compare to the infinite and eternal glories of heaven.

Rom 8:18 ~ “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (see Jn.16:22)

➤ In 1 Peter 1:6-9, Peter highlighted four ways in which Christians rejoice in their salvation.

1. Joy in the midst of trials (vs.6)

➤ We are to have joy in the midst of any and every trial: *“though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials”* (vs.6). The Christian’s joy is impervious to the experience of *“various trials”* (*poikilos peirasmos*), because the Christian’s salvation is impervious to the experience of trials. As our salvation is unchanging and so our joy is to be unwavering. The are *“grieved”* (*lypeō*; fig. heaviness) but that grief does not destroy their joy.

Rom 12:15 ~ “Rejoice [*chairō*] with those who rejoice [*chairō*], weep with those who weep.”

1 Thess 4:13 ~ “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve [*lypeō*] as others do who have no hope.”

➤ This can be a difficult truth for us to grasp and apply. Most people have an innate desire to avoid suffering at all cost, and to think there is nothing beneficial about experiencing trials. We typically want to pursue pleasure and flee from pain. But Scripture repeatedly opposes that paradigm with a different perspective on sufferings and trials. As Christians, we are to rejoice (or be thankful) *in* our suffering, but rejoice (or be thankful) *for* our sufferings.

1 Thess 5:18 ~ “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Eph 5:20 ~ “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Col 3:17 ~ “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

➤ God is glorified when His children trust Him, and persevere in Him, in the midst of trials in life. He is pleased when our faith is unwavering in the face of sufferings, and honored when we rejoice in Him above any earthy thing.

1 Peter 4:12-16 ~ “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”

2. Joy in the outcome of trials(vs.7)

➤ We must not waste our trials. We must not think that, as Christians, we are immune to suffering trials. And we must not think that God will prevent us from being *“grieved by various trials”* (vs.6). God has a unique purpose for our sufferings. In fact, there are many divine reasons why God causes/allows sufferings in our lives.

God can use trials to strengthen, deepen and purify our faith. He can use trials to humble us. He can use trials to correct or discipline us. He can use trials to awaken or direct us. He can use trials to enable us to empathize with and encourage or comfort others.

- Peter highlighted one beneficial outcome of trials: *“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”* (vs.7). Trials also serve as a refining fire – *“tested by fire”* (*dokimazō pyr*) – purifying our faith in God by burning off all that is impure (sin, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, worldliness, etc.). Trials test the *“genuineness”* (*dokimion*; testing, proven genuine), of our faith.

Trials are the crucible that refine our faith, and metals are purified by fire (see Ps.12:6; Prov.17:3; 27:21; Is.48:10). God uses trials to smelt all the impurities out of our faith, to remove the dross of insincerity, superficiality, or hypocrisy.

- In trials we get to see what our faith is really made of. In times of tranquility and prosperity, we can mistakenly think (or boast) that we have great and resolute faith in God. But in times of trials and sufferings, we have the unique opportunity to see the veracity and fidelity of our faith [Note: we must not always contrast trials and blessings, because trials themselves can be a blessing from God].

James 1:2-4 ~ “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Rom 5:2-5 ~ “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

- While we do not always know how God will use our trials, we can be assured that He has a good purpose for them all – for our good and His glory.

3. Joy in the object of our faith (vs.8)

- Thirdly, we rejoice in the object of our faith: *“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”* (vs.8). We must never turn Christianity into merely the “Christian’s” religion. We must never have purely an academic or ritualistic Christianity. Our lives must be driven by a passionate and faithful love for Jesus Christ. True faith is more than merely believing in Jesus. It also involves loving Him with a supreme and sacrificial love. To these Jewish Christian exiles, Peter wrote *“Though you have not seen him, you love him”* (vs.8).
- The root of a true faith in Christ is love for Christ. The deeper one’s love for Christ, the stronger one’s faith in Christ. Likewise, the deeper one’s faith in Christ, the stronger one’s love for Christ. A person cannot truly be said to have a faith in Christ where there is no love for Christ, and a person cannot truly be said to love Christ where there is no faith in Christ. While true faith in Christ is more than merely believing in Jesus, it is certainly not less than believing in Jesus. Peter wrote: *“Though you do not now see him, you believe in him”* (vs.8). As Christians, our love for and belief in Christ will not always be perfect, but they both must be genuine.
- Notice that this faith in the invisible Christ produces Christian joy. Peter wrote: *“Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”* (vs.8). The word *“rejoice”* (vs.8) is the same Greek word (*agalliaō*) translated *“rejoice”* in verse six. It means to greatly rejoice, or to be abundantly happy. Also, like it is in verse six, it is in the present tense indicating that it is an ongoing/continuing action. In other words, even though Christians do not physically see Christ they are exceedingly and continually joyful in Christ – *“rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”* (vs.8).

Let me say again that this is not the bubbly-giddy superficial happiness, but true internal and spiritual happiness in the Lord. Joy is not always manifested in smiles and giggles. Pain, sorrow and trials are all part of the Christian life. But the Christian's joy remains resolute, immovable, and eternal because Christ remains resolute, immovable, and eternal. My guess is that many of those who have "deconstructed" their faith, took their eyes off of Christ and focused instead on the "religion" of Christianity, or the world around them, or imperfect Christians, or the flawed church.

Heb 12:2 ~ "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Heb 12:2 ~ "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NIV)

4. Joy in the outcome of our faith (vs.9)

- Christians not only rejoice in Christ (the person of Christ), but they rejoice in what Christ has done (the work of Christ). They have joy in Christ, and joy in their faith in and faithfulness to Christ, for they are "*obtaining the outcome of [their] faith, the salvation of [their] souls*" (vs.9). The Greek word translated "*obtaining*" (*komizō*) is in reference to receiving that which is promised or expected. So, once again, we see that our hope and joy is based on the nature and character – the promises – of God.

Here, the word "*outcome*" (*telos*) refers to the completion or finality of what has been promised. This is one reason why the Christian's joy and hope are undiminished and unwavering! No matter what happens in this life, true Christian can be assured that they will receive that which God has promised in Christ: "*the outcome of [their] faith, the salvation of [their] souls*" (vs.9; see Jn.3:16; Rom.5:1; 8:1).

John 19:30 ~ "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished [*teleō*]," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Rom 8:18 ~ "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (see Heb.11:25-26, 35)

2 Cor 4:17 ~ "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison"

- Christians are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. True saving faith in Christ, as Lord and Savior, is the means by which we receive God's saving grace (Rom.5:1; Eph.2:8-9; 2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:3-5). But this "*salvation*" (*sōtēria*) is not just a future hope, it is a present reality. As Christians, we are currently delivered from the penalty of sin (justification) and the power of sin (sanctification), and one day will be forever delivered from the very presence of sin (glorification)!

Rom 8:28-30 ~ "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

Conclusion

- The song for this morning – written in 2023 by Keith Getty, Matt Boswell, Matt Papa – is title "I Set My Hope on Jesus (Hymn for a Deconstructing Friend)."

When this life of trials tests my faith / I set my hope on Jesus

When the questions come and doubts remain / I set my hope on Jesus

For the deepest wounds that time won't heal / There's a joy that runs still deeper
There's a truth that's more than all I feel / I set my hope on Jesus

*I set my hope on Jesus / My rock, my only trust
Who set His heart upon me first / I set my hope on Jesus*

Though I falter in this war with sin / I set my hope on Jesus
When I fail the fight and sink within / I set my hope on Jesus

Though the shame would drown me in its sea / And I dread the waves of justice
I will cast my life on Calvary / I set my hope on Jesus

*I set my hope on Jesus / My rock, my only trust
Who set His heart upon me first / I set my hope on Jesus*

Though the world call me to leave my Lord / I set my hope on Jesus
Though it offer all its vain rewards / I set my hope on Jesus

Though this heart of mine is prone to stray / Give me grace enough to finish
'Till I worship on that final day / I set my hope on Jesus

*I set my hope on Jesus / My rock, my only trust
Who set His heart upon me first / I set my hope on Jesus*

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