

1 Peter 1:6-8
Hope in the storm

The Faith/Hope/Love Nexus



Last week we saw this text breaking down into 6 main sections that are like good friends – totally interconnected. They are all excellent qualities on their own, but any one of them is *not as good* on its own as v interconnected with the others. They supp

There is so much more that can be done whe they are all present and working together in c especially in a group of such individuals! Thos become the true church and are very useful to the purposes of

God! These are the qualities of the Holy Spirit, and when they are present and consistently working together in an individual and in a group, there is a picture of God's NEW CREATION restoration!

Vs. 3 – Hope

Vs. 4 – Security.

Vs. 5 – Faith

Vs. 6 – Joy/rejoicing

Vs. 7 – Adversity –

Vs. 8 – Love



My early high school football practice was the hardest thing I have ever been through, I think. We had a sadistic coach that ran us until we dropped – that made us fight and claw each other for a chance at playing on the first string. If someone started ahead of us, we had the opportunity at the beginning of every week to challenge that first stringer for the right to take their place on the first string – the team that would be out on the field playing in the game on Friday night. The coach’s philosophy was that he wanted the strongest, most determined, most aggressive, and most fearless players on his first string team. If you were on the second or even third string and could prove that you had more of those qualities than the guy who played in front of you on the first string, well then you could immediately take his place! We had a supremacy drill that determined who would start that week. We would line up against our rival 10 yards apart, with the whole team looking on, and the coach would blow the whistle and the two players would charge off the line and go directly at each other, head to head. The object of the drill was that whoever dominated the smash-up in the middle, was the player the coach wanted to practice with the first team that week. What you really wanted to do was hit the other guy so hard that he ended up on his back with you on top. It was the best of 3 such encounters! So no one was secure. Anyone could challenge for our starting spot. For the first half of the season, there were a lot of challenges and I was one of the challengers. I was on second string and wanted the position on first string. I thought I could best the guy in that position so I told the coach I wanted to do the supremacy challenge. The key was to not hold back – to go into that smash-up with everything you had and hit head-on at full speed! Of course the natural temptation was to hold back at the last second so the collision didn’t hurt as much. But the trick was to not give in to that fear, because it was ALWAYS the guy who hit the hardest that got hurt the least. Anyway, the first collision with my rival was a bit inconclusive. We hit really hard, but slide off to the side of each other. The second time, I looked over at my opponent and saw what I thought was a glint of fear/of intimidation in his eyes. It gave me incentive to go at it even harder,.. and sure enough, I was able to get under him, pick him up and put him on his back! The third time he was even more intimidated, and I was able to do it again! I actually saw him cringe just a bit at the point of contact - which meant he did not have a chance, because I did not cringe. So, amidst all the cheering, approving teammates, I won my starting position that day! It was a big day for me! So, in that way we continued to beat up on each other in practice for the whole season! My youthful body got hard and strong. By 2/3 of the way through the season, I felt impervious to pain, I was gaining in strength by leaps and bounds, and my endurance went through the roof! I stopped getting sore or tired, or bruised. Finally, the last game was against our cross town rivals and I was an offensive lineman - a tackle. That game I dominated my opponent. He was probably twice my size, but every time the quarterback called a play for the runner to go through my slot, I was able to slam him aside and the runner would scamper for 7-10 yards every time. It got so that anytime the team need a first down they would run through my slot, and every time that same play would produce! We dominated that game! It was the most amazing feeling! I don’t think I have ever been through so much fatigue and pain, but in the end, I felt so powerful. I felt like I could play forever without fatigue and could dominate *anyone* they put in front of me. It wasn’t true, of course, but I didn’t know that at the time. But that day was an amazing triumph for me and will always stand out in my memory as a day when all the pain paid off in a great triumph!



Last week we spoke of the spiritual nexus, or “friends”, that we need as believers, interconnected qualities of the Christian life that every follower of Jesus needs deep inside them controlling their emotions, their choices, their inner conversations. Last week we got through the first three - **hope, security, and faith** – so this week we will finish up with **joy, adversity, and love** that we see in verses 6-8.

Hope – We have hope in the face of death, because we know someone, Jesus, who died and came back to life by the power of His own will, and who has promised to do the same for us! *“He who believes in me will NEVER die!”* He promised! He was speaking about our eternal life, the real life that begins after this one!

Security – Our life here and our real life - eternal life - is secured for us in heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ, where nothing can touch it or diminish it! It is there in the living vault of Jesus!

Faith – We believe in the promises of Jesus, in His claims - backed up by miracles and the resurrection! One of those claims was that He can save us for everlasting life with Him in His heaven and that it is secured *in Himself – the most secure place in all the universe!* To believe this we have to believe in the reliability of the Bible – which means we believe in the reliability of the eyewitness that He first made those promises to, and who wrote it down and reported it to all Christ-followers down through the ages who would follow them! And we believe in the Holy Spirit who guided them to write it down just the way that He wanted them to!



And then, today, there is **Joy/rejoicing** in vs 6! I like this one! It hard for me to understand why Christians have the reputation of being sour-pusses in this world! Maybe because we don't join in on the party the world perpetually throws for itself! The world rejoices all the time! The world loves to party! Of course, they seem to consistently need the assistance of drugs or alcohol in their system to lose their reserve and get themselves into the mood to *“rejoice”*. And then, under the influence, it is often perverse conversation, stupidly unfunny, or even slurred and incoherent – when people make fools of themselves and their drinking or toking friends laugh *at* them because of the foolish spectacle they are making! Well, I guess I don't call that “rejoicing”. It is mostly too dark and rooted in people's inner pain, and there is too much of enjoying the foolishness and bad behavior of others! It is a kind of *anti-rejoicing!* It does not appeal to me at all!

True rejoicing, as the Creator-God intended, comes from deep down in a person's spirit because that spirit is genuinely HAPPY! The smile and laughter comes from a happiness that resides in their core being! It is edged with innocence in a world where innocence is an endangered species! But that person who knows Jesus personally has ample reason to feel very blessed – to celebrate their good fortune with laughter - with good-natured cheerfulness, and with delighted, childlike positivity! I mean who on earth would not rejoice if they were sure that their future was bless beyond imagination and as secure in that blessing as anything can be?! I mean, would you rejoice and jump up and down and laugh and cry if you won the multi-million dollar lottery? Of course you would! What we have in Jesus is worth rejoicing over! There is just no room for a long face! Even if the world is falling apart around us, (and it is), our future is secured! Added to that is the fact that we bear an awesome message of hope to a world that is full of anti-rejoicing because they have no hope! They expect to find *no answers* to the dilemma of their own mortality, and to their guilt, and to their shame, and to their failure! But *we* can tell them there IS hope! We can tell them that there is a Living Jesus – the ONLY hope for ruined lives in a fallen, chaotic, and dying world!

Unfortunately, many proclaimed Christians do not have this kind of joy in them! Their perspective is poisoned with cynicism and negativity! On Facebook, if their posts aren't dissing or expressing their contempt for the craziness of the politically progressive crowd, they are going after their fellow Christians for disagreeing with them on anything from theology to COVID-19. Unfortunately, there is only anger and scorn in their hearts. *There is one guy on YouTube that has a podcast called "Wretched". The guy fancies himself a watchdog for evangelicalism, so every program is tearing down people he thinks are false teachers in the church. He actually is usually right, but sometimes he is not. Sometimes he is just sensationalizing and creating clever but rude sound bites! I can see someone outside of the body of Christ viewing him and concluding that if that is Christianity, it is a long-faced, loud-mouthed movement full of self-important sour pusses! I know we must be on our guard against heresies and heretics, but a perpetual diet of criticism and cynicism is not of Christ! It just is a distortion of Christ's message, because one of the primary components of Christ's message is joy and the freedom to rejoice that bubbles up from deep within where a Christ-follower is so very blessed to have the Spirit of God reside! How can we not prefer to speak of the things that bring joy as we follow Jesus? Jesus changes lives in powerful ways.! Certainly we need to be alert to the craziness and hypocrisies of this world and of the heresies in the church, and we need to hate that stuff! You *know* I believe that! But it cannot be our focus! Our true focus is the Living Jesus whose life we are pledged to live, and whose promises to those that do are so wonderful that it makes us celebrate! [1 **Thess. 5:16-18**]



And then, coming on the heels of rejoicing, there is perseverance in Adversity in verse 7! Hmmm!

Man, when I was in grade school they liked to give us these tests with 4 or 5 pictures in them. One picture was different than the others and we had to circle which one was different – which one did not fit with the others! I think they were testing us to see if there was anyone who could not process and differentiate basic visual information! Well, I have to say that this one, **adversity**, just, seems out of place among the others. It may *seem* that way, but it is not! These people were having a rough time of it! To be a vocal Christian was to bring down the wrath of the local authorities down upon your head! Peter is trying to encourage them in the midst of their harassment or endangerment, telling them that painful things are necessary for them to become strong! He is telling them that if they can accept it, God is whipping them into shape, using the evil that is directed toward them by the world to make stronger, more faithful and reliable servants of Christ! In fact, these Christians would not know themselves as being strong unless or until they faced adversity for Jesus! *I have always wondered how I would do in war in the midst of a battle! Would I be able to overcome my natural fear and do what needed to be done to survive and complete my mission? I think I would, but I don't know for sure because, thank goodness, I never had to go to war and put it to the test! I just missed the Viet Nam war! I will never know the answer to that question for sure because I have never been in that extreme situation! And now I am probably too old to ever find out! No one wants hardship and adversity in their lives. No one asks for greatly exhausting, grinding, frightful, things to be forced upon them. We don't pray and ask God for that! No, we pray to be *delivered* from evil! But sometimes we are not delivered, and when it happens, we need to be praying something else – like “*God I can't do this, God I can't handle this, God give me strength to endure*” - and He does! And then we have grown in our faith and our determination to follow Jesus against all opposition! 100s of thousands of Christians have been killed over the centuries, martyred, going to their painful deaths praying for strength, and singing hymns of praise, or offering forgiveness to their killers with their dying breaths! Jesus needs His followers to be tough, to have thick skin, to stand up to the pressures of the culture and of our peers. They will be representing the enemy of Christ, Satan – trying to get you to join them in hating people by skin color, or to hate all the rich people, or to hate Christ-followers, or to hate the police, or to label and hate *anyone* that doesn't agree with them and their simplistic slogan-filled viewpoints. We see it right now. The media and the leftist/progressive protestors are saying how bad it is to be Caucasian/white. If you are white and on top of that a Bible-believing Christian, you are especially designated to be the lowest evil on earth! How will you stand up to that kind of cultural pressure and manipulation as a young person? You either stand up to it or you give in to it! It is disguised as a standard of morality, and if you do not subscribe to it, you are evil! And who wants to be evil?! But if you are strong enough to think, and hold to what you know is true in Jesus, and to hold your ground firmly, and to learn to defend your viewpoint and promote and project the love of Christ – then Christ can use you! You have passed through the fire of a very difficult time of proving and refinement! You are stronger for having gone through it! Now you can persevere and follow Jesus with a determination you did not know you had before! It is your day of triumph, when you pain pays off!



Do you have the strength to see through their arguments?! According to them, to be righteous you must be pro-abortion, anti-capitalist, pro-socialized medicine, pro-cannabis, anti-police, pro-LGBTB agenda, pro-green party, and hate yourself for being white, or if you aren't white, then to hate all whites, for being white is the root of all the worst evils of society! THEN, *if* you subscribe to all that, then *maybe*, you can join the ranks of the super righteous- even if you are white! At least you are “woke” – the right kind of white! But let me tell you something, kids - not one of those super righteous social justice warriors have the hope of heaven! Being a leftist/progressive does not make you righteous – especially in God's eyes! I promise you that! From what I have seen, the “progressives” are an angry, envious, power-hungry, manipulative, ends-justifies-the-means example of fallen human nature. They are hopelessly lost in their own misery and will remain there *until they find Jesus!* Young people, if you give into the temptation to adopt their new morality, you will become as lost, miserable, hypocritical, and separated from God as they are! The vast majority of these people are God-haters at the core of all this! God and religion stands in their way! They want to rule over people's hearts and minds, and God gives a person a mind of their own! So they hate Him! God has always given Christ-followers a mind of their own. That is why we have been kill in the hundreds of thousands over the last two millennium! We are good citizens, but we have a mind of our own, even under, and perhaps especially under, pressure! We cannot be manipulated and controlled and government officials and human cultures *hate* that! This is the type of pressure the church and Christians are under these days. It is not beatings, imprisonments, and executions, (not yet anyway) but it is still a great cultural pressure especially for Christian youth! And if they go in that direction, they will abandon God every time! But we will see! These trials test people young and old to see what they are made of – to see if they have the strength of character and courage that is needed to be a true Christ-follower, and then to see what God can do with that!



Vs. 8 – Love - *FOR CHRIST FIRST!* We haven't seen Him, but we love Him! He has to be the focus! The focus is not the love we have for each other, but the love of Him! Once we are loving Him, the love for each other follows like a train follows its locomotive! The other train cars have only one way to go! They follow behind the lead locomotive, down the tracks in one direction. If love is in its proper order, where Christ is loved first, foremost, and best, our service to him can't be ruined by the normal human pettiness and foolishness that persistently erodes human love and cuts off all our potential for growth as a person and as a Christ-follower! Human love says I will love you until you hurt me, or until you do something that I don't like and then my love will evaporate for you like a swipe of alcohol on a windy day! The love of Jesus channeled through us by the Holy Spirit is a different kind of love. It is patient, forgiving. It absorbs the inevitable blows that come from association with other human beings, but those blows only serve to toughen love, not weaken it! As we are secured in the love of Jesus, so are we secured in each others love that seeks to pass on that secure, battle-proven love of Christ! But once we are rejoicing, battle-hardened followers of Jesus – love is our goal, our standard! It is how we win the hostile world for Jesus, even to the point of giving our lives to do it! This is how Satan is defeated in the end – by the selflessness and self-sacrifice of tough-minded Christians who risk *and sometimes lose* their own lives for the cause of Jesus! [Rev. 7:9-17]

