

1 Peter 1 v 7 - 9

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[0 : 0 0] So, John chapter 21 and verses 15 to 17, so not too much, but just by way of centering our thoughts upon the Lord Jesus before we come to sing and worship him.

This is, of course, after the resurrection. Jesus himself had been seen on several occasions by the disciples. Simon Peter and the others had gone fishing, and Jesus had appeared to them and come and spoken to them on the lakeside and had breakfast together, and then he takes Peter aside.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these? Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you truly love me? He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me?

[1 : 1 9] He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep. One of the most important things that we need to be aware of, and the most important and critical, as it were, test of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is that question.

Do we love him? May believe in him? May believe that he was born as a son of God? May believe he died for our sins? These things are important. Faith is important. But do we love him?

That's the test. That's the proof. That's the evidence. And our first hymn is a hymn which hopefully we can sing with that sense of in prayer. Let's come to him.

Our most glorious and faithful heavenly father. We thank you for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for him who is indeed the love of our hearts, the love of our lives. He is the one, O Lord, which we count more precious than anyone else in all the world.

[2 : 3 0] And the reason that we do love you, Lord Jesus, and the reason we love you, Heavenly Father and Holy Spirit, is because of all that you have done for us, all that you have done that we might know your love, all that you've done out of love for us.

We confess again this evening as we come before you, the holy and mighty God, that in honesty and in reality we are sinners. We do not deserve to be loved.

We deserve, really, your judgment and your justice. And yet, Lord, we thank you and are amazed and awestruck because we recognize that though we deserve one thing, you've not given it to us, but you've given us something completely different.

You've given to us of your undying and unconditional love. You have set your love upon us and determined that your love should be experienced by us and known by us and felt by us.

You've made us the subjects of your love, the ones, O Lord, that you will care for and do care for, the ones that you will provide for and do provide for.

[3 : 44] Lord, we are a people this evening, not just us here, but every single one of those who Jesus died for, who've come to know him and trust him as their saviour, every single one who's been born of your spirit, every single one around the world, O Lord, that was once lost but is found, like us, was once in darkness but now has been brought into the light, like us, one who was unlovely and alienated from you, like us, but has been brought into the embrace of your loving kindness, that embrace, O Lord, which is in the arms that were stretched out upon the cross, the arms that were pierced with nails, the arms that felt pain and anguish that we shall never know.

O Lord, we thank you that we are welcomed and we are received and we are loved and we are a delight to you. And O Lord, we do want to respond as only we can with, we love you, Lord, I love you, Lord.

We know our love is so small in comparison with yours. It's like a pea compared to Everest. But, O Lord, we know that we do love you. We want to love you more and we want to tell you of our love for you.

We want to tell others of our love for you. And we want that love, O Lord, which you've placed in our hearts to be a love which constrains us and moves us and changes us. A love which empowers us and drives us.

A love, O Lord, which causes us to be people of service and obedience, of witness, O Lord, we ask that again as we come into your presence, our God, we ask that by your spirit you would cause our love to increase.

[5 : 32] And love to deepen. And our love to grow. That we may be the people, O Lord, that show that we are your disciples because not only is our love for you but for one another.

Thank you that your love is practical and powerful and we want our love to be the same. And so we ask that even this evening we may be greatly blessed by you and that we might know, O Lord, you meeting with us to change us and fashion us and shape us because, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, as you have loved us and poured your love into our hearts, so we want to be more like you.

We want indeed that our lives should show that you are the love of our lives. So come amongst us, forgive us our many sins, give us your help to understand your word.

Lift our hearts and set them free to worship you in spirit and in truth. For we ask these things in your name. Amen. Together now.

1 Corinthians 13. And we're going to read the whole of the chapter together. And a bit later on we're going to be reading and looking at 1 Peter 1 where we've been the last few weeks.

[6 : 58] Here is this great and glorious chapter which speaks of the most excellent way. So 1 Corinthians 13.

In the NIV there's a line before and we'll include that line under the subtitle love. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains but have not love, I am nothing.

If I gave all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind.

It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered.

[8 : 05] It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled.

Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror. Then we shall see face to face.

[9 : 06] Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain. Faith, hope and love.

But the greatest of these is love. And to Peter's first letter. It's right near the back.

If you go right to the back of your Bible, you have Revelation and then you'll go Jude. And then you'll come in a bit further and you'll go to 3, 2, 1 John. And then you'll get to 2 Peter.

And then you'll get to 1 Peter. Which is where we are. And we're going to read from verse 3 to verse 9 of the first chapter.

We've already looked at verses 1 to 7 in previous weeks. And we're going to concentrate particularly on verses 8 and 9 this evening. But let's hear again God's word.

[10 : 07] Verse 3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Kept in heaven for you. Who, through faith, are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice. Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes, even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Thank God he is faithful to his word.

[11 : 35] There's been a great phenomenal rise in the past decade and certainly in the past few years in internet dating. It's very big business nowadays and there was a big problem with one particular site just a few months ago which was encouraging extramarital affairs.

But with internet dating, people are able to get to know one another without actually meeting one another. Some people even decide to get married after only contact via the internet.

They may live several thousand miles away and before they even meet, they fall in love and decide to marry one another and live together. And for many of us, I guess, that's not something that we would like to have done and glad we didn't fall in love that way.

But for some people, it does still work. And though they don't meet each other, these people get to see photographs of one another and perhaps even Skype one another, speak over the internet or see video clips of one another and they can hear the person talking and get to know them.

How can somebody fall in love with a person that they've never seen? I guess it must happen to men and women who are blind, who fall in love and get to meet a person and hear them.

[13 : 00] But how can we fall in love with someone we've never truly met in that way? It may seem impossible. And yet here, Peter says, that's just what's happened to the Christians he's writing to in this letter, speaking about Jesus' revelation of himself when he comes again at verse 7, though you've not seen him, you love him.

Of course, Peter saw Jesus, didn't he? He was one of those 12 disciples who spent about three years with Jesus in his company, getting to know him, seeing him working and active in miracles and in teaching.

And we know, of course, that Peter came to love Jesus, didn't he? Even though right near the end when Jesus was being tried and in that court of the Sanhedrin, Peter denied knowing Jesus those three times in cowardice.

Yet, as we read from John 21, Peter did love Jesus. And again, three times, as Jesus asked him, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Peter had come to love Jesus more than anyone else in the world.

And it's quite obvious that Peter still loves Jesus as he writes this letter. 30 years or more have passed since the last time he saw Jesus. When Jesus was taken up into heaven before his eyes, Acts chapter 1 records that.

[14 : 23] But it's clear he still loves Jesus. He still has a great delight in the person of Jesus Christ as we see all the way through this letter, how he speaks of him as the perfect Lamb of God and so on.

But for these Christians to whom he's writing and for every Christian since then, including ourselves, we have not seen Jesus. Though you've not seen him and so you do not see him now.

We haven't seen Jesus in the past. We haven't seen him and neither do we see him now. So can we truly love him? It's the question.

Can we truly love him if we've never seen him? Of course, a great deal of people in our present generation consider that love is based on appearance.

It's how you appear, how you look that makes you attractive or makes you worth loving. And that has had huge ramifications upon young people in particular about how they see themselves, how they dress, how they act, how they behave because they want to be loved, they want to be accepted and they hope by dressing in a certain way or putting on makeup in a certain way that will influence them.

[15 : 42] But it's not, of course, just in attraction, in relationships that people put a lot of emphasis upon appearance. It's everything that we deal with today.

Appearance is the greatest influence upon the products we buy, upon the car we drive, upon the house we live in, upon the pet we own. Other factors may have some bearing in these things but really in the end it comes down to appearance.

But the Christian lives by a very different set of standards. Christian does not live their life making decisions which are based upon appearance, upon sight.

For one of the great principles of the Bible is that principle that Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 8, we live by faith and not by sight.

It's a principle, it's by which we live. The AV is we walk but it's the outworking of our lives day by day. We live by faith not by sight.

[16 : 54] And faith has had a big influence upon Peter's letter, hasn't it? He's been speaking about faith all the way through. He's talked about the fact that we are shielded through faith, verse 5.

And then he's talked about the fact that the trials that these believers were suffering, the persecution and difficulties were all a testing of their faith. These have come so that your faith may be proved genuine.

Peter has assured these believers, these troubled believers, these struggling believers, that their faith, though going through a fire, actually is something which is the guarantee of their inheritance in heaven.

They have a future inheritance, verse 4, that can never perish, spoil or fade. And that is kept in heaven for them but they themselves by faith are also shielded and we looked at that word together the other week and it means garrisoned around as it were within a great fort.

They themselves are kept safe as well and prepared for that day of salvation when Jesus comes again. They are securely sealed, their inheritance, the treasure, the rewards that are theirs which Christ has bought by his blood at the cross and they themselves, they are safe.

[18 : 14] Nothing in all the world can rob them, can take away from them what God has given them in Jesus. But again, the reality is that all these things are unseen to the natural eye.

We can't see heaven, we can't see our treasure up there and the blessings up there, we can't see Christ yet coming in glory into the world. One day every eye will see him coming but we can't see that yet.

All these things that God has promised us are unseen, they're hidden from our sight. All we can see is like these believers here is we can just see the troubles around about us, we can just see the difficulties, we can just see what it's like living in a wicked world.

Is there nothing to rejoice in at the present that we experience? Must we face all these troubles with naked faith and nothing else?

No, says Peter. For today, in this present evil age, we have three very real tangible blessings that are ours to enjoy.

[19 : 24] That's what we find, I believe, in verse 8. Because as he's come to the end of verse 7 and he's assured them of that glory that shall be theirs and that they shall share in when Christ is revealed, he then says, though you've not seen him, you love him and even though you do not see him now, you'll believe in him and are filled.

There's a present tense in all of this with an expressible and glorious joy for you're receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. There is an inexpressible and glorious joy that we are to know and to experience in the midst of our trials and the source of it is found here.

Peter says it's inexpressible. He means really, in that sense, it just can't be explained. It's that sort of joy that the world can't understand.

We can see it in a certain aspect. You know, there are some people who really, really enjoy golf. Other people just can't see how they could possibly enjoy golf.

But they do. It's otherworldly. Other things as well. Trains, engines, and so on. Flowers, wallpaper.

[20 : 40] But this is different. The believer cannot express in words the inexpressible joy they have in Christ. The believer cannot explain to somebody who's not a Christian what it really feels like to know God.

We try as best we can but it's just like whoosh, isn't it? And in one ear and out the other. Without knowing it for ourselves, without knowing it for yourself, it just can't be explained.

It's not just a jolliness. It's not just a feeling of happiness. It's not something that arises because of the circumstances and situations of life. as most pleasures do.

And that's of course because as we see here this joy, this inexpressible joy finds itself coming from our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It's all centered in Him.

And because we can't see Him, then the world cannot fully grasp it. And because we can't see Him, we can't explain it as much as one day we shall.

[21 : 46] When our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world as we should be celebrating and thinking about and as He went and conducted His public ministry, very few people rejoiced.

I mean, at His birth we had some shepherds and some kings. That was it. Wasn't it? Herod wanted Him killed. The whole of the people of the town were in turmoil, we're told, were troubled when they heard these things.

Throughout the ministry of our Lord Jesus, yes, a lot of people walked with Him when He turned against Him and turned away from Him and didn't receive His teaching. Again and again, He was put up to be attested by the religious leaders of the day.

He was publicly ridiculed. In the end, He was mocked, He was scorned, He was murdered. He had shown in His life by His miracles and mercy, goodness to tens of thousands of people.

Think about it, there was 5,000, the first feeding of the 5,000, that was just men, then the feeding of the 4,000, that was just men as well, then there was all the children in the family and then there was all the people who saw those many things.

[22 : 55] At His death, He was left to die alone upon a cross. All His disciples rejected Him, just His mother, another woman and one disciple, John, were there.

See, the sight of Jesus is not the foundation for our joy and faith. Many people would say to us, if I could just see Jesus, I'd believe in Him.

If I could just talk with Him, then I'd believe in Him, but that's not the case. Thomas was a bit like that, wasn't he? Thomas wanted to see Jesus, he said, look, until I can see the holes in His hands, until I can see and put my hand in the side where the spear went, I won't believe that He's alive, I won't believe in Him.

And so what did Jesus do? Wonderfully, graciously, patiently, He came to Thomas and revealed Himself to Him and Thomas said, my Lord and my God. Yes, He saw and believed, but listen to how Jesus responded to what He said, because you've seen Me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. There's greater blessing in believing without sight, greater blessing to be had through faith than seeing.

[24 : 11] The sad, sad truth is that all the world will see Jesus one day. All the world will see Him with their eyes as He comes in great power and glory and judgment.

But by then it'll be too late. But then, when they see Him for who He really is, they will kick themselves for all eternity that they never trusted in Him and believed in Him and put their faith in Him, but by then it's too late.

That seeing of Him will not produce faith in them. It will only bring forth great distress. But we have an inexpressible joy.

joy. And again, notice that it is something we are filled with and we are filled with now. In the midst of the trials, the difficulties, the testing of our faith. So what is it, what is it that gives us this unworldly joy?

What is it that causes us to rejoice in this way? The first thing is our loving.

[25 : 28] Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Now, it would seem more appropriate, wouldn't it, especially when we think about Paul's letters and elsewhere, it would seem more appropriate that Paul would say something, Peter would write this, Though you have not seen Him, He loves you.

That's great, isn't it? Though you have not seen Him, He loves you. That would be a lovely thing to say and perhaps what we'd expect Him to say but He doesn't say that. When He says, Though you have seen Him, He says, You love Him.

When it comes to the experience of love, it is better to love than to be loved. Cast your minds back if you can to when you were first in love with your spouse.

Think about how you were, how you felt about that person. That partner that you came to love, to marry, to spend many years together with. Think about, if you can, that gooey feeling that you had.

Wasn't it? You had that sort of daydreamy air about you. All you could do is think about that person. You loved them. Yes, you knew they loved you but the feeling of loving them was wonderful.

[26 : 41] I was intoxicating. I'm going to embarrass my wife now. When we were first married, I was an assistant minister at church in Shropshire.

One day, my senior minister said to me, Look, it's been three weeks now since you got married. Will you please wipe that stupid grin off your face? Well, he said soppy rather than stupid.

Yes, Jesus loves me. It's marvellous. It's wonderful. Jesus loves me but I love him. And that's marvellous and wonderful too, isn't it?

That's something, when we think about not only the love of Christ, when we think about how much we love him and what a delight, we do have that bubbling joy, don't we? And it's our present experience.

Yes, I know he loves me. I know he loves me in all the difficulties of life. I know he loves me in the highs and the lows. I know his love for me never changes but I experience a love for him too.

[27 : 39] I feel it. It's real. And again, as I said before, this is the cornerstone. This is the touchstone. This is the central, vital element to evangelical Christianity, to Bible Christianity.

It is something known and felt. Evangelical Christianity is not simply assenting to certain truths about the person of Christ and the work of the cross.

It is saying, I have felt the love of Christ and I feel and experience a love for him that I cannot express and put into words but I know that I know that I know. And so the question I've got to ask you, dear friends, is this.

Do you still love Jesus? Do you still love him? Does the thought of Jesus fill you with an inexpressible joy or is it really the sense of same old, same old?

When you come to church on a Sunday, when you sing the words of worship to Jesus, is there something that happens? Is there something that's going on? Or is it all in the head and none of the heart?

[28 : 49] This love for Jesus is a delightful thing to possess. It's the gift of the Spirit of God. There's no doubt about it. We can't sum it up. We can't make it happen. It isn't something of our own doing but it's real.

As the Spirit of God works in our hearts, we love him. And so the very beginning of our inexpressible joy is as though we don't see Jesus, we love him.

Yes, we loved him. That's why we sang that hymn at the beginning. I loved him when he died for me on the cross and I loved him when he came into my life and I'll love him until I die and I'll love him in heaven.

It's an ongoing thing, isn't it? I've used this terrible illustration before but I'm going to use it again. It's not like the husband whose wife turns to him after 50 years of marriage and says, Dear, do you still love me?

He says, Yes, I told you that on the day we got married. If anything changes, I'll let you know. You still love me. Do we still love Jesus? Is it something we feel?

[29 : 51] And then he talks about almost in a very similar way, he says, Though you have not seen him, you love him and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him.

And again, it's hard for us because we obviously speak English and this was written in Greek and the language there is an ongoing, constant doing word. So in one sense, it wouldn't make sense but it would say this, Though you do not see him now, you believing in him.

You believing in him. We're constantly believing in Jesus. We didn't just believe in Jesus at that one moment when we received the gospel and trusted Christ.

Yes, we had faith. We believed in him. We saw him as the savior of our sins. We saw him as the one who died in our place. There was an exercise of faith that took place there when we took hold of Christ and said, He is my savior, he is my Lord and I will follow and trust in him.

But we've gone on believing all the way through, haven't we? From that moment when God's spirit broke into our hearts and faith was given us, we carried on believing. We're still actively believing.

[30 : 58] We're still trusting in him. That's why we have that phrase from Paul in 2 Corinthians 5. We walk by faith. We're walking by faith and not by sight.

But this believing of which Peter's writing is much more than that. It's not less than believing certain truths about Christ and believing him to be the savior and Lord, the one who took our sins at the cross.

But in the context that he's writing, I believe he's talking more about this sense of trusting. Remember, he's talking to Christians who are going through trials, going through real, practical, physical, experiential difficulties.

And so they are trusting him in the midst of those things. They are trusting him. They are believing in, not just him, but they are believing in his care.

They're believing in his love. They're believing that he's in control of their lives. They're believing that his hand is upon them. They're believing that he's never going to leave them or forsake them. They're believing that he's at work in all things for their goods.

[32 : 09] That's much more than just a mental acceptance that certain things are true. That's something of a believing which has the heart engaged in it. It's an activity in which we are resting in, trusting in Christ not to drop us.

It's like the child on the shoulders of the dad as they're wading across a stream. That child's not scared. That child's not worried.

He's trusting. He's believing in his dad that his father will carry him across, that he won't drop him. He has no fear. He has no anxiety. When we trust in Christ in this way, it removes our fears, it removes our worries and it replaces them with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

In the midst of suffering, we have complete peace in the person of Jesus to care for, sustain, be with, and bless us. And it's something we feel, isn't it?

It's not just something we know, it's something we feel, that in one sense again, flushes out fear and feels peace. There's a contentment that comes.

[33 : 32] There's a sense that comes of, yes, can I use the word happiness? Here I am, I'm facing these difficulties and trials, but I cannot bring myself to be afraid.

I cannot bring myself to be anxious about these things. I cannot bring myself to be distraught about these things. Why? Because I just, I'm just trusting Jesus and I feel it.

The reason why trials cause us grief is of course because we do not trust Jesus. The reason why we find ourselves becoming distressed in circumstances and our joy missing is because we aren't trusting Jesus.

I want you to imagine, imagine two passengers flying on an airplane from London to New York. One of them has never, ever flown in an aircraft before. The other person flies that route every single week for business, has done for 10 years or more.

As the plane is in mid-Atlantic, it experiences some quite bumpy turbulence. Which passenger is fearful and anxious that the plane might crash?

[34 : 47] And which passenger is fast asleep, peacefully, in his seat? The one who knows, the one who trusts, the one who's been there before.

That's in one sense what these trials are about. As we go through them and Christ brings us through them again and again and again, he's teaching us that through whatever turbulence we find ourselves going through, we can rest peacefully in him.

We can trust him that nothing is out of his hands. So our inexpressible joy comes from love, our love for him, from faith, our faith in him, and there's one more thing.

One more activity that is the source of our strange, inexpressible joy. For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Now as I've said before, each one of the verbs that's used here is a continuous active. It's a present ongoing. So that's why it's well, it's translated well there in that sense in verse 9.

[36 : 02] For you are receiving. Not that you will receive future or that you have received past. The goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Yes, we have received the salvation of our souls. We've been forgiven. We are children of God. We are reconciled to him. We are in relationship with him. And yes, we are going to receive the end because he's just been talking all about that, hasn't he?

He's been talking about the fact that when Christ comes we have this future hope. That we shall be with him and that we shall enjoy the inheritance that he has for us when he comes again. But that's not what Peter's talking about.

He's talking about something today, something now. He says, you are receiving. It's something that we experience as we go through life even as we pass through times of trouble.

So what is it that we are receiving already but is yet to come? What is it that we're already tasting of but will have its fullest expression when Christ is returned?

[37 : 11] It's the daily experience of our salvation. And the phrase that's used here for you are receiving the goal of your faith is in one sense it's a sense of you are taking hold of, you are appropriating for yourself.

Sorry to use that word. Not because it's a rude word. It's just because it's a big word, isn't it? It's appropriate. You're taking hold of, you're receiving, you're enjoying, you're making part of your daily experience the salvation of your souls.

What does that mean? How can we sum up the salvation that we have in Christ? I think we can sum it up in two things.

We could go on and on and on. I'm not going to do that. Thankfully. There are two things isn't there that we can sum up. What is our salvation?

First of all it is forgiveness for our sins. Forgiveness for our sins. That's something that we know has taken place but it's a constant cause of joy, isn't it?

[38 : 16] It's a constant cause of joy. All my sins Christ has taken at the cross when we dwell upon that and think upon that now it gives us an inexpressible joy.

God does not hold my sins against me. Hallelujah. Yes on the day of judgment he won't hold them against me but he doesn't hold them against me now. And of course the truth is though I am totally forgiven of all my sins I know I still sin and I still get it wrong and I still fail and I know that I can come to my father and again he will gladly and freshly forgive me.

That's something we feel isn't it? Forgiveness. Just as we feel guilt let's be honest we all know what that is we know what it is to feel guilt so we feel forgiven and we're receiving that as we're dwelling upon the promises of God as we're thinking upon what Christ has done us on the cross sometimes when we come to the Lord's table together as well we're being refreshed with that sense and that feeling of forgiveness I'm forgiven by almighty God.

But the second thing as well of course that is our salvation is that we have been forgiven but we have been reconciled to God There's the experience of forgiveness but there's the experience of being brought back into a right relationship with our heavenly father who made us and the evidence of course that we are reconciled to God the evidence that we have been saved of course is that we talk to him in prayer Don't we do that every day?

Of course we do Think about it Think about that I'm sure you've had the occasion particularly in the past before we had the great communication technology we have now but there may be somebody has gone away on holiday or gone away from us gone to university or gone to backpacking whatever it may be and we haven't heard from them for several days and we're concerned about them worried about them where are they are they okay and then we get the phone call oh I'm so pleased to speak to you so it is with our heavenly father we were cut off from him we were separated from him we weren't able to draw near to him but now in Christ of course we've been reconciled what a delight it is to speak to God what a delight it is to pray haven't you experienced that dear friends?

[40 : 39] Yes we know that prayer at times can be a struggle and we know at times prayer can be a wrestling with God about issues and concerns we have but aren't there sweet moments in fellowship with God in prayer where we just feel ourselves caught up with him and enjoying being in his presence that's real and so Peter is saying you're receiving the goal one day you're going to be in heaven one day the goal of your faith is that all your sin and all the imperfections of life will be removed and you'll be perfect in the presence of God and of course you'll be with your heavenly father and with your saviour and that's what makes heaven heavenly you're going to be with the one who loved you and who you love but you know what you don't have to wait to heaven to start enjoying those things we don't know them in fullness but we know them in such a way that they bring about an inexpressible and glorious joy the party which is heaven has started we're heading to the party so we're already getting in the mood for it

Paul writes to the believers in Philippi chapter 1 being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus dear friends let me urge you let me encourage you please don't put off the enjoyment of your salvation until heaven if you haven't begun enjoying the delights of the Christian life already then you need to start because though we do not see him we love him and though we don't see him now we believe in him and though we don't we are looking forward to that day when we shall have the goal of our faith we're already receiving the joy and benefits and blessings of it now and these are the foundations and these are the experiences of all God's people let's sing let's sing together our final hymn it's that glorious hymn which speaks so much of what Christ has done for us and what it means to know him 647 in Christ alone my hope is found he is my light my strength my song

I Rick I He is my life, my strength, my soul His glorious stone, his solid crown The new hills that's crowned and saw What heights of love, what depths of peace When fears are still, what striding seas My comfort, my holy Lord

Here in the love of Christ I stand Who guilt in life, and fear in death This is the power of Christ in me From life's best ride to final breath Jesus commands my destiny No power of health, no scheme of man And I ever want me from this land Till he returns from course beyond Here in the love of Christ I stand

Therefore we do not lose heart Though outwardly we are wasting away Yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us An eternal glory that far outweighs them all So we fix our eyes not on what is seen But on what is unseen For what is seen is temporary But what is unseen is eternal Amen Amen Amen Amen