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UNSHAKABLE: An Unshakable Joyⁱ
1 Peter 4:12-19

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, church family. I want to welcome those of you that are guests with us today. Thank you for entrusting us with your Sunday. It is our prayer that our church already feels like home for you.

We would love to connect with you. We would ask you to text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you text that keyword to that number, you'll be sent a link back that will take you to a form to enter basic contact information.

If texting isn't your preference, I certainly understand that. You can stop by our information center located in the lobby, under the banner that says, "Hope is Here." We have a team that would like to meet you and give you a gift as a way of saying thank you for being with us this morning.

CHURCH UPDATES:

Before we jump into our study this morning, I want to take an opportunity to talk through a couple updates regarding what's going on in our church, things I'm excited about and things that are coming up. A quick family meeting.

Of course, next week is Fun Camp. This is our church's version of Vacation Bible School for kids completing 1st through 6th grade. It's a ton of fun and we need your help. We currently have 104 kids pre-registered! We typically have a slew of kids register in person, so we are expecting a big number, and we need your help. Tonight is training for volunteers for Fun Camp. If you would like to help, and I hope you do, come tonight at 5:30pm, and we will plug you in and you can help us disciple kids and share the gospel. I'm pumped for that.

I also want to update you on the process of installing new deacons. Earlier this year, our elder council looked at the growth of our church and the need to identify and install new deacons to serve our church. We initiated that process by asking active covenant members to nominate qualified men to serve as deacon in our church. We were hoping to install 10 to 15 new deacons to meet the needs of our growing fellowship. We began the vetting the top nominations you submitted.

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Through a process of visiting with those men, having them fill out a questionnaire, being interviewed alongside their wives, and after prayerful consideration by both these candidates and our elder council, we put before you 13 qualified men. Last Sunday we began, according to our bylaws, a 7-day objection with cause period. That period ended yesterday at noon, in which we received no objections.

So, I'm excited to say that we will be charging and ordaining the 13 men we put before you. Mark your calendar for next Sunday, June 16th. As a part of our services that morning, we will charge these men to serve our church wholeheartedly and pray over them. At that point, they will begin serving our church as deacons. Of course they will be trained over the next several months. I'm excited about this group of men as each one has demonstrated a love for our church, and I think they are going to serve you very well.

One final thing that I want to let you know about that I am excited about. You know, God's hand is on our church, and He is at work in many ways. Evidence of God's work is in the installing of new deacons, but also His calling people in our church. A couple weeks ago, we licensed Mike Murray and sent him out as Pastor of East New Hope Baptist Church right here in our community.

Well, our elder council convened an ordination council to consider ordaining our Student Minister, Eric Jones. We have now had a front row seat for over a year watching Eric minister in many ways. He's never been ordained. Ordination is the highest endorsement a church can make on a minister. It's a recognition of a call to ministry and being gifted to serve & lead the Church in Gospel ministry.

So, we convened an ordination council last Sunday. That council interviewed Eric for over an hour in the areas of his Christian life and witness, his call to ministry, and his doctrinal beliefs. The ordination council was made up of some of our deacons, elders, as well as area pastors. After his interview, they unanimously recommended we proceed in ordaining Eric Jones to the Gospel ministry. Now, Eric's not going anywhere. He's staying here leading our student ministry, but we, as a church, are going to set him apart and endorse his ministry to the fullest by ordaining him.

So, I want you to mark your calendar to be a part of a special ordination service on Sunday, June 23rd at 5:30pm. We will worship together, challenge Eric, lay hands on Eric, ordain him, and present him with a gift that we believe will bless

him and his ministry. Again, that will be on Sunday, June 23rd at 5:30pm right here in the worship center. How awesome is that? Can we give The Lord a hand of praise for all that He's doing in and through our church? Amen!

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Alright. Well, we came this morning to study God's Word. Thanks for letting me give those family updates today. But I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me now to 1 Peter, chapter 4. We're in a teaching series we've called Unshakable, working our way through the New Testament book of 1 Peter. Today, we come to chapter 4 as we look at verses 12 through 19. We are going to look at an unshakable joy.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Oxymoronsⁱⁱ

Are you familiar with oxymorons? You guys know what I'm talking about? An oxymoron is a figure of speech where two words that conflict with one another are put together to describe a feeling or situation. Some examples of my favorite oxymorons include, "unbiased opinion." Now, if someone says they are sharing their unbiased opinion, you know what's coming, right? How in the world can an opinion be unbiased?!

Or what about the phrase, "awfully good." My wife's cooking is awfully good! I'm confused. Is it awful or is it good? Don't answer that out loud, fellas!

What about, "act naturally." You know, I do not have the ability to hide what I'm thinking from my facial expression. It especially flares us when I go into to, say Walmart or someplace like that, and watch people. Anyone else relate? Cathy will say to me, "Change your face, Chris. Act naturally." Like I have to act natural by not being my natural self. Listen, if I were to act naturally, I would walk up to them and ask, "Who approved your attire to come into this store?" Anyone with me? No? Just me?

Well, the best way I can describe what Peter is getting at in our passage today is an oxymoron. He's going to say that we, as followers of Jesus, will experience a blessed suffering, a joyful affliction. His point is that we have a joy so deeply seeded, that it rises above even the challenging circumstances we might face in our lives. An unshakable kind of joy.

We are going to look at three words, based on Peter's teaching, that teaches us how to have joy in suffering. Anticipate, attitude, and application. We are to

anticipate suffering, have the right attitude about it, and then apply joy in our lives. That's where we are headed this morning.

MESSAGE:

Let's begin by looking at how an unshakable joy comes by way of...

1) Anticipating.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to anticipate, expect, trials and tribulations in our lives. Look at 1 Peter, chapter 4, verse 12. ¹²*Beloved* [love that he calls them that], ***do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*** In other words, anticipate times of suffering.

In many ways, we tend to read this verse and think, "Oh thanks. How is this encouraging?" In many places in the Bible, The Lord tells believers to expect trials. And in just about all those cases, it is mentioned as a matter of fact.

Jesus said in John 16:33, ***In the world you will have tribulation.*** In the opening chapter of James, he says, ***Count it all joy, when you meet trials of various kinds.*** And then here in 1 Peter 4:12, he says, ***do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you.*** And Peter writes about suffering 21 times in this letter alone. Trials are not a matter of if, but when. But there is reason for hope, which results in the ability to approach such times with joy.

You know, one of the biggest objections made by atheists surrounds the problem of evil. If God is so good, and God is Almighty, and He is those things, then why is there evil in the world? Or another similar question is, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Or some ask, "Where is God when tragedy hits?" Or even, "Why do the godly suffer?" Really good questions, challenging questions that we all wrestle with. But, to me, the bigger question would be, "Where is no God when difficulties hits?" Isn't that a far worse proposition?

We should be bothered by injustice and evil. But my point is that we can be hopeful that there is a God, and that is often the only thing that makes sense of the brokenness we all experience in a shattered world. There's a hope knowing that at least God sees our pain and works in and through it to bring about His good. Anticipating trials afford us the opportunity to have joy in the midst of it. Let me couch this idea this way. When we give people gifts, they are often wrapped. We wrap gifts to disguise what inside the gift. Now, some of you are

really good and wrapping gifts. I'm terrible at it and it always looks awful. But we receive gifts by going through the wrapping.ⁱⁱⁱ I think what we have to see in this teaching is that **there is a gift of joy in a close relationship with Jesus that many times comes by way of navigating the wrapping of suffering.**

Have you experienced that truth? I have. I've experienced a nearness to Jesus in times of great trial and uncertainty. Joy with the Savior wrapped in suffering. Sometimes the suffering that leads to nearness comes by way of divorce, illness, loss of a loved one, a wayward child, loss of a job, financial trouble, or extreme loneliness. Sometimes we experience the pain of ridicule for our faith and beliefs we hold to be true. But in all of that, there can be a joy that we can find and hold onto. That's what Peter is saying.

Now, a couple things that Peter is NOT saying. He is NOT saying that we are to be happy about our trials. No person in their right mind is happy about difficulties they face. But joy and happiness are two different things. Happiness depends on circumstances; joy is a state of being a supersedes circumstances. I heard one definition of joy as, "A feeling of good pleasure that is dependent on who Jesus is rather than on who we are or what's happening around us. Joy comes from the Holy Spirit, abiding in God's presence and in His word."^{iv}

Peter is also NOT saying that being happy is bad. God created us, in His image, and happiness is an emotion that God designed for us to experience. That's important to the discussion here because there are some that would suggest that the Christian life can't be one of happiness. Now, I think it is important to clarify here because some people seek happiness apart from godliness. Listen, trying to find happiness in the things of this world and the passions of our flesh, is a fruitless pursuit. That only leads to further pain and anguish. The point is that happiness is not bad, just shouldn't be the chief aim.

But again, Peter says we are to anticipate suffering. And when we anticipate it and are not surprised by it, we can work to experience joy in it. So, we have an unshakable joy by anticipating suffering. Secondly, unshakable joy comes by way of our...

2) Attitude.

By attitude I am talking about our perspective, how we think about and approach times of suffering. Our attitude often dictates our approach. Look at what Peter says in verse 13. He says, "¹³But **rejoice** insofar as you share

Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 3 times, in one verse, Peter says we are to have an attitude of joy.

We are to be a people of joy. Christians are to be a joyful people and that will always be contagious and relevant. And an attitude of joy, especially when facing a trial, brings opportunity to be a testimony. I want to quickly mention 2 specific attitudes that I believe leads to an overall attitude of joy.

First, Peter says we are to **rejoice and be glad**. Instead of being surprised by suffering, we are to rejoice and be glad in it. The idea in the repetition of what seems like similar words is to convey that we have reason for joy, in any suffering, both now and in the future.^v Being able to rejoice now prepares us for being overjoyed in the future.^{vi} In other words, there is a purpose in the here and now; to be a testimony and identified with Christ. And then, in the later, when, as Paul said, "Our light and momentary affliction is outweighed by the weight of eternal glory." In other words, our attitude of joy is not just driven by our happiness in this life, but in the promise of what is to come. That perspective positions us to know joy here and now.

The second specific attitude that contributes to an overall attitude of joy is understanding **the cause of suffering**. It is easier to have joy when we know why we might experience suffering. Look at verses 14 through 16. ¹⁴*If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you* [that is that God is with you in your suffering]. ¹⁵*But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler* [those traits deserve consequences]. ¹⁶*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.* In other words, there is a difference in suffering for Jesus and in dealing with consequences to sin. Consequences is not suffering, it's what we deserve. You see the difference. Knowing the cause is for Christ, it allows us to be joyful for that.

When we can rejoice and be glad, know the cause of potential suffering, and know Whom we can trust, we will be able to display an overall unshakable joy. So, we have anticipating and attitude. Now, in the time we have left, let's look at...

3) Application.

So, here's the question. How do we contextualize this passage and apply it in 21st century America? Because, let's be honest, the suffering you and I

experience is nothing compared to what the people Peter pastored and current day believers in closed countries face. They risk their lives to participate in church, and we go to church if it's convenient or if they play the songs we like. Truth be told, we only know suffering in the form of first world problems.

So, in effort to be true to the text, and allow it to shape our hearts and minds in a context that is much freer than the original audience, I think we must view suffering here as an honor and shame construct.^{vii} Yes, Peter's audience were facing physical persecution, even death. But shame was a hurtful tool as well for a society where honor was high currency.

Christians in the first century certainly endured shame for their faith. Again, to a much greater degree than you and I experience it. But I do think that we are going to see a continual increase in shame directed toward believers in the future. Take the past 50 years or so. Claiming to be a Christian 50 years ago, got your foot in the door. Today, being a Christian could be cause to NOT want to be around you. Again, I'm not saying that is the case everywhere, because we live in an insulated part of the country where being a Christian is still viewed relatively positively. But what we're seeing happen on a national stage does seem to indicate that the general view of followers of Jesus is declining. Now, a big question there is that because of something we're doing?

But the point I'm making, I think we can relate to this passage in the very real threat of being shamed for our faith. How are we to maintain joy in that? I want take Peter's teaching and mention 4 ways to have joy in suffering.^{viii} First, ...

A) Welcome it.

Now, I know that sounds strange to say to welcome periods of suffering and shame in our lives. But what I mean by it is to view it as an opportunity. It is a test, a proving, that our faith is indeed genuine. Anyone can love God when you benefit from it in any way. But when we live for Jesus when we're experiencing trials, we exemplify Him.

Isn't Jesus our ultimate example here? Especially when it comes to being shamed. Hebrews 12:2-3 says, "*Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the **joy** [there's unshakable joy rising above circumstances] that was set before him endured the cross, despising the [what?] **shame**, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured*

from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."

Listen, if we are shamed for our faith then we find ourselves in the company of our Savior. That's what a life in Christ is all about. Peter says, "*do not be surprised,*" verse 12, and, "*you are blessed when insulted for Christ,*" verse 14. In other words, welcome suffering. Secondly, ...

B) Focus on the greater.

The way we find joy in the presence of increasing shame is to focus on greater truths. Peter said, verse 14, "*14If you are insulted for the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, [why?] because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*"

Jesus addressed this approach directly in His Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5, verses 11 and 12. *11"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for **your reward is great in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Listen, the greater reward is not here in the temporal. The greater reward is in the eternal, in glory. Focus on what you are achieving in heaven. That's greater. Welcome suffering and shame and focus on what is greater. Thirdly, ...

C) Please an audience of One.

I think we are all daily faced with the question of who we're trying to please. For some it is trying to please your boss, or your neighbors, or your friends. Others it's your parents or a spouse. And some are just trying to please themselves and follow their own heart. And I'm not saying that you shouldn't be concerned about those folks, but are we doing it at the expense of pleasing God? He is the audience of one to whom we should be most concerned.

Jesus said, "*No one can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*"^{ix} Yes, we can seek to please God and thereby please our parents. But if we are willing to sacrifice morality to get a job promotion, then we are not pleasing God. And that's the real temptation with shame persecution. Is it not?

Students, peer pressure never goes away. It confronts you in late elementary and never ceases to tempt you. We must learn to not be so preoccupied with

the way others sees us and be more concerned with the way God sees us. And when we live that way, we'll find joy in it.

God does see it. He is always our audience, even when we are compromising our convictions. That's why Peter writes in verses 17 and 18, *"17For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God [that means that it begins with us, believers]; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18And "If the righteous is scarcely saved [meaning not because of anything we do, but what Jesus had to do for us], what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

Welcome suffering, focus on the greater, please an audience of One. Finally,

D) Trust God, stay the course.

Look at verse 19 of 1 Peter 4. *"19Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will **entrust** their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."* The word translated as, "entrust," means a deposit.^x It's a banking term.

When we make a deposit into our bank account, we entrust it to our bank for safe keeping. Peter says that we have a more secure place to entrust our souls. God is a faithful Creator. That is saying that God is faithful and is sovereign over all we face. Therefore, we can be confident that God will be with us, see us through the things we face, and He will provide the strength that is needed to endure, keeping our faith safe for all of eternity.

But also notice that Peter says that we entrust our souls to God, *"**while doing good.**"* When we continue to fight the good fight and remain faithful to a faithful God, it is an expression of our trust in God. We are to develop a stubborn streak, that no matter what happens to us, we live our lives in obedience to The Lord.

We can find joy, even in suffering, when we anticipate it, maintain the right attitude in it, and apply it in our lives. How do you have joy in difficulties? You welcome it as an opportunity, you focus on what is greater, seek to please an audience of One, and trust God and stay the course.

CONCLUSION: GOSPEL CONNECTION:

I don't know where you are today. Perhaps you are in the middle of what Peter describes is a fiery ordeal. I may not know exactly what that is for you, but I know that God knows it and has a purpose and plan for your life.

If you are here today and you have never trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to come to Jesus today.....

Maybe you are in need of support through your difficulty today. God has given us the church to be that in times of need. Allow us to be the church for you today.....

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude: Vol. 37*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 2003; Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Paul A. Cedar, *The Communicators Commentary: James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, Word Books: Waco, 1984; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Peter*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, 2004; William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1976; Max Anderson, *Holman New Testament Commentary: 1 & 2 Peter, I, II, III John, Jude*, Holman Reference: Nashville, 1999; David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: 1 Peter 4*, published by Enduring Word Ministries, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-peter-4/>; Troy Rackliffe, "Stand Firm in Your Faith: Message 9," preached at Glade Community Church, notes given by Troy Rackliffe; Bryan Loritts, "Together We Endure: The Same Kind of Different as He," sermon preached at Summit Church, August 2, 2020, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/the-same-kind-of-different-as-he>; Skip Heitzig, "Rock Solid: The Dos and Don'ts of Suffering," sermon preached at Calvary Albuquerque, May 11, 2014, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/175/sermon/2392>.

ⁱⁱ List of oxymorons found online: <https://thelingwist.net/stupidly-brilliant-oxymorons-that-will-make-you-laugh-out-loud/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Illustration adapted from John Elmore, "Trusting in Suffering," sermon preached at Watermark Community Church, April 17, 2023, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-y-SfZ74idw>.

^{iv} Kenneth Ortiz, "What is the Biblical Definition of Joy? Examples and Importance," article published by Theology For The Rest of Us, November 4, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.theologyfortherestofus.com/what-is-the-biblical-definition-of-joy-examples-importance/#:~:text=The%20biblical%20definition%20of%20joy%20says%20that%20joy%20is%20a,from%20hope%20in%20His%20word>.

^v Schreiner, page 220.

^{vi} McKnight, page 249.

^{vii} Pointed out by McKnight, page 253.

^{viii} Adapted from McKnight's discussion on pages 254-257.

^{ix} Matthew 6:24, ESV.

^x Strong's Concordance, 3908, paratithémi.