

The Spirit has kept us focused on what it means live as an alien in this world—as one who is traveling through on a mission from God and who seriously does not belong in this place. For instance, last week we talked about how the suffering and trials that we are constantly going through are all about God giving us opportunity after opportunity to choose to live like the aliens that we are. Our trials are opportunities to disconnect from our normal sources of safety, provision, validation, identity, worth, and acceptance, and to learn what it means to practically trust Jesus to be each of these things for you; because, as your “I Am,” He is these things for you.

I know that all of this can be just words and just another teaching that you listen to and then move on from; but here is the deal. I don’t think God is going to be ok with that. He is more than serious about all of this and He has entrusted you with this knowledge. In fact, I believe He will continue to press into you until you decide that you truly want to live either like a child of God or like a child of the world. He will respect your wishes (that is something we have most definitely learned), but judgment begins with the household of God and as He did with the church at Ephesus and Sardis, He is already sorting through those who are truly His and those who are not—even though they think they are. The time is near and the Lord is on the move.

God wants us to be identified in the core of our being—in our souls—as children of God and He wants others, by experience, to know that is true. Therefore, He wants us to be convinced that as our Lord everything we experience in our lives is carefully selected by His hands. He wants us to be entirely confident that every bit of it is measured, prescribed, and extremely

intentional. And as our lover, He wants us to be certain that all of it (no matter how distressing) is **good** and is exactly what we need in order to know Him for real, to trust Him for real, to be like Him, to think like Him, to share His mind, and to be found in Him thankful and full of wonder and awe. To even begin to ponder living this way, seeing God and our lives through this lens, is a little bit crazy, radical, extreme and sets you apart as a freak—even amongst so called believers. But from God’s perspective this way of living is to be our norm. We are aliens and strangers and although we can enjoy aspects of this world it does not belong to us; therefore, we are not to find our life here. Again, we are to be truly identified, at the core of our being, as children of God.

1 Peter 1:8-9

... and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

In this passage, the Spirit makes a point which most of us tend to miss. If you really step back and assess things, you are already crazy, radical, extreme, and kind of a freak. So you might as well own it all the way. Don’t stop part way down the path like most people have done; own it and see it through to its end like those people of faith that we read about last week in **Hebrews 11**. Think about it. You have never actually met Jesus, but for some reason you love Him and you act like you know so much about Him. How is that even possible? Could you imagine coming home to Mom and Dad or to your roommates and definitively declaring

that you love some man or woman whom you have never ever met but have only read about on-line or in a magazine? They would think you are off your rocker (at least they should). It would be time for a little—well actually a lot of—intervention. And since the Greek uses the word “*agape*” you don’t just “love” Jesus like you would someone you never met in a fantasy type infatuation, you don’t just “love” Him like you would your closest mate, you don’t just “love” Him like you would your mom, dad, brother, sister, or even your best lover, you have a crazy love for Him that cannot even be captured by any human experience. Your love for Him is unexplainable yet at the same time absolutely undeniable. Still from the perspective of those in the world, you have only read about Him in a very old cryptic book written by a bunch of crazy men. How does that kind of love happen with a complete stranger? They don’t understand and they think you are crazy.

And more than that, even though we say He is alive, He has not bothered to appear to us and convince us that this is true; yet, we still believe He is alive and we continue to believe in Him and nothing is going to change our mind. Again, the implication of this passage is that you are already “crazy,” at least from the world’s viewpoint, you are already a radical, so you might as well take it all the way. Don’t stop. Let Him have His way with you. If Jesus is really God, if He is really the one and only Lord, if He is really the Almighty, then how you view this world, this life, and your place in the here and now needs to radically change and your perspective needs to be aligned with all that He has said about you.

Furthermore, this supernatural divine love that you have for Jesus literally births in your being the ability to rejoice, as such you do rejoice. This is said as a

statement of actuality—as a characteristic that marks all true believers. It is in the *present middle indicative*. *Present* tense: it is in your now; it is your experience. *Middle* voice: it comes from deep within your being; it is part of you. *Indicative* mood: it is a statement of fact and therefore uncontested. You greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. This idea that this joy is inexpressible or not spoken-out comes from the reality that true children of God have joy in their being because they have Jesus. Don't be confused; I am not talking about those who merely indulge in the religion of Christianity. I am talking about true believers; true believers have His joy.

In **John 15**, Jesus says that we are to abide in Him as a branch abides in the vine (we are to be distinct from those who make their abode in this world) and then in **15:11** He says that He has spoken these things that **His joy** may be in us and our joy may be complete or made full. In other words, the fruit of choosing to continually abide in Jesus will be complete joy. He repeats a similar idea in **John 17:13**. Then **Galatians 5:22** teaches us that the fruit of the Lord's Spirit abiding in our lives is joy. Joy therefore is an attribute of Jesus and comes with His presence. It is not a gift; it is part of His personhood and is therefore experienced or made full when we abide in Him or trust Him completely. In other words, to the extent that Jesus possesses our being we will experience His joy. If He owns us, our joy will be made full. If we have restricted His access to only small parts of our soul, then we will only know a little joy. After all, it is His joy.

Therefore, for true believers, this unspeakable joy becomes infused into our being as the Lord's Spirit takes up residence in our lives via our **New Creation**. Accordingly, this joy is experienced and is more than tangible even though it

cannot be expressed in words. It is a reality; and quite recognizable when you run into it.

Now the fact that this joy is full of glory just seals the deal that this is Jesus' joy and is something which no man can manufacture. The Son of Man is glorious (**Matthew 16:27**), and He sits on a glorious throne (**Matthew 19:28**); He has the glory of His Father (**Mark 8:38**); and the apostles saw this glory (**John 1:1**), it was the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. The Father glorified Jesus (**John 8:54; 13:32**) and according to **John 17:10**, He has been glorified in us. Hence, this joy of His has been infused into our being and it is full of His glory since it is a part of His glorious personhood. **Romans 9:23** says it this way, He has made known the riches of His glory on us—His vessels of mercy—which He has prepared beforehand (or selected from before the foundations of the world) for glory. What a marvelous truth. He has made know the riches of His glory on us. Wow. We were created to inhabit His glory. Now that's a thought!

I know that even though my trials have been more than distressing, I have always had a joy deep in my being knowing that I belong to the creator of the universe, the one who is above all, and that I will rule and reign with Him for all eternity. He has kept me sustained through everything and that in and of itself is glorious; it has been His work and therefore by definition my life has been full of His glory. By the way, "full of glory" is in the *perfect passive participle*. So it is a done deal. The *perfect* tense indicates that I have always been marked to be a recipient of His joy that is full of His glory. He decided it and that is the way it was always going to be; it was just a matter of time. And He did it (*passive voice*) and this is something that continues on and on and on, hence the *participle*. His joy

that is full of glory is always going to be mine and it will be made full as He fully comes to possess my being. Hence, that is what those trials are all about—my learning how to give myself to Him so He can fully possess me and complete His glorious joy in me.

In fact, that is more fully explained in **1:9** where it says, “obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” When casually read, this seems to be one of those little tag lines that are great for Christian calendars, but it has far more to say than meets the eye. The way we read it, especially in context of our distressing trials, it seems that we suffer, we die, and then we get our reward—our salvation, yippee. It is the outcome of our faith. And sadly that is how most of us feel about this life and about what we must and necessarily endure.

But if that is what the Spirit wanted us to understand “obtaining” would be in the *future* tense or quite possibly even in the *aorist* tense. But not too surprisingly, it is in the *present* tense and it is a *participle* in the *middle* voice. This is fascinating because it ties directly into the idea of our suffering and the necessity of our having to endure various and distressing trials. Thus, since “obtaining” salvation is in the *present* tense and a *participle*, we know that we are even now continually obtaining the salvation of our souls. And since it is in the *middle* voice, this is an experience that comes from within our being and it is not happening to us. In other words, something switches within us such that we are now finally taking advantage of, or appropriating might be a better word, the salvation which Jesus has given us. We are taking a hold of it and owning it.

Let me just start by saying that our salvation is not just about going to heaven. It is about our experiencing eternity in our now; hence, “obtaining” the salvation of our souls is given to us in the *present* tense. We have talked about this at length as Jesus made it abundantly clear (again, utilizing the *present* tense) that eternity is a present reality and something to be realized in our now (**John 3:15, 16; 5:24; 6:40, 47, 54**). So if the “salvation of our souls” is a present reality, what are we being saved from? After all, we know we are going to heaven, we know we are saved from the Lord’s wrath, and we know we are saved from the Second Death. Therefore, I believe we are now being saved from ourselves; more specifically, from our *Old Sinful Nature* or the “*flesh*” as some translations frame it. This is critical. Understanding this and accepting this truth will give you the reason you can rest in all that God has planned for your life and even embrace your trials knowing they are necessary to your experiencing the joy of the Lord which is full of His glory.

Our soul (which is made up of our mind, our emotions, and our spirit) is the part of us that is unique and will follow us into eternity. It is our very personhood and is who Jesus has always been in love with. But sadly, our soul has been conditioned our whole life to listen to the lies and deceptions of our *Old Sinful Nature*. For the longest time our soul was permanently attached to our *Old Sinful Nature*, so we know it well and we kind of still love it and trust it. When we accepted Christ, however, He gave us a new nature—our **New Creation**—and severed the direct connection to our *Old Sinful Nature* (that is what it means when the Bible says we have been circumcised in Christ). The “*flesh*” or the *Old Sinful Nature* has literally been cut away although tragically it has not been taken away (that won’t happen until we die or are raptured). Thus, we no longer have

to listen to and obey its voice, we get to chose whether or not to listen to and obey its voice. The Spirit of God having taken up residency in our ***New Creation*** is in direct competition with our *Old Sinful Nature* for control of our soul. As ***Galatians 5*** puts it:

Galatians 5:16-17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

The New Living Translation says it this way:

Galatians 5:16-17

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

In other words, as long as we live in these bodies, our choices are never free from this tension. Therefore, the Lord literally goes to war against our *Old Sinful*

Nature and He purposefully brings trials in our lives specifically targeted to get us to stop taking the direction and advice of our *Old Sinful Nature* and to get us to start taking the advice and direction from the Spirit of God who abides in us. He wants us to prove out our craziness (or our faith) by trusting the intangible reality of His life and rejecting the tangible offerings of this world. Thus, each trial you must endure is about saving your soul from the poison and destruction of the *Old Sinful Nature*.

James 4:1-10 and **Romans 8:1-8** makes it clear that your *Old Sinful Nature* is an enemy of God, never has obeyed God, and never will obey God. Therefore, **James** tells us to purify our hearts and stop dividing our loyalty between the flesh and the Spirit. **James** exhorts us to now choose on our own to humble ourselves before God and honor Him. But the truth is most of us simply will not on our own take this sort of aggressive action against our flesh because we trust it more than we trust God. But thankfully God is such a jealous God who desires us so badly that He designs these trials to teach us why it is always a horrible idea to follow the *Old Sinful Nature* and why it is such a wonderful and marvelous idea to follow the Spirit. He uses these trials to teach us to believe that He is our Lord, that He is good in everything He does, and that we can trust Him and make the choice to live as an alien in this world. Thus, if we let His trials have their way in our lives, if we embrace His purposes, if we let the fire result in burning off our desire to cling to our flesh and instead cling to the Spirit, we will know the salvation of our souls and we will have His joy that is full of glory. And remember, since “obtaining” is in the *middle* voice, we know this “salvation” is about our choosing to cooperate and appropriate the life in Him which Jesus has set before us. It is a product of our choice to believe, to trust, and to risk our lives on all that Jesus has said.

Another way the Bible communicates this concept is by saying that the Lord wants to transform us into His image by the renewal of our minds and He wants to do this so the world will not conform us into its image (**Romans 12:1-2**). One or the other is going to happen; there is no happy medium and there is no middle ground. It's as if our choices sit on a fulcrum that always bends either to the left or to the right. That is why Jesus said, "He who does not gather with me scatters" (**Matthew 12:30**). The Bible makes it clear that with regard to our choices things are black and white and there is no grey; grey is a fiction of the religion of Christianity conceived and perpetuated so we never are truly confronted with the reality of our choices. We either choose to let God transform the way we think (thereby experiencing the salvation of our souls) or we will be conformed by the world. This is made clearer by the fact that in **Romans 12:2**, both "transform" and "conform" are in the *passive* voice meaning it is something that is automatically done to us. Again, there is no grey (which, by the way, is why I am so thankful for that pool of grace which into which we always fall).

Therefore the outcome of our faith, or the end of our faith, or the final expression of our deciding to trust God through any given trial is "obtaining" the salvation of our soul. I want you to take note of the fact that "salvation" is a noun and it is not a verb. Thus, it is a state of reality; a state of being, really. It is not an action that is being done—we are not progressively saved, we just progressively realize or learn to live in this salvation. When we agree to trust God in the area that He has tested us (whether those tests came as children or as adults), when we have reconciled our experiences with His love and purpose for our lives, we will have victory; it will be ours. In that area of our lives our salvation has now become our own and not just some ethereal concept that we hope to understand

when we die. In other words, we don't continue to be overtaken, ruled, and controlled by our *Old Sinful Nature* in that area where we have though faith trusted God. We no longer need to utilize our dysfunctional coping mechanisms. Instead, we have learned, at least in that area, that it is not worth it to stay clinging to our "*flesh*." So salvation is ours; it is our experience; it is our reality. And once that area belongs to Jesus, He designs further trials to get at the next piece of our soul where our mind and our emotions still cling to our *flesh* and to this world instead of to Him.

1 Peter 1:10-12

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.

This passage is intended to serve as an exclamation mark to the point the Spirit has made about you being aliens and desiring you to choose to live as aliens. You see, the Spirit wants you to understand how separate, set apart, chosen, loved, and precious you are to Jesus. He wants this truth to really sink in so you will know and accept your value and worth and your identity and stop trying to find it in this world. Again this is an exclamation mark; He wants you to get this for real.

When we read about the prophets of old, we kind of shudder given that they were amazing men and women of faith though whom God did such amazing things. We read about all their great deeds last week when we reviewed **Hebrews 11**. They really capture our attention and there have been so many times we have said, “I can’t wait to meet David, John the Baptist, Isaiah, Job, Daniel, Joseph, Moses, and so on.” But guess what, they have always talked about meeting us. Yes, those great men stood in awe over the things the Spirit showed them regarding this “salvation” and they wondered what amazing people we must be for the Lord to give us such care and consideration, honor and privilege. They didn’t get such blessing; but we did.

In speaking of these great men of faith, **Hebrews 11:39-40** says, “And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.” He promised something better for us. They could only hear about us, they could only imagine what God was doing with us, and they did not receive the promise; we did. We lead the way and without us they would not be made perfect. We lead they follow, even though to our minds it should be the other way around. We read about their lives, their character, their suffering, their endurance, their faithfulness, and we are amazed; we look at our lives in comparison and quite frankly we are somewhat embarrassed.

Our embarrassment comes from the fact that the enemy has done his job lying to us and convincing us that we are identified by our failures and our weaknesses and all that this pathetic world has to offer us. He has done an amazing job. But the Spirit wants us to know that we are called for better than that. We are

glorified in our weakness and failures because Jesus has made us right with Him. As such, all our failures and weaknesses are not even in the way of our relationship with God; they are just in the way of our being able to experience this salvation that is ours. Remember, we have peace with God; **Romans 5:1** makes it clear that there is no separation between Him and us. And then consider this passage in **Romans 8:31:-39**.

Romans 8:31-39

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies [or makes us right with Him]; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you understand how special we are to God? Nothing can separate us from His love. He has made us right with Him; and He will freely give us everything He has promised because we are that amazing in His eyes. Why? Because that is how He has chosen to deal with His bride. He loves us, He adores us, and He has done everything just to get us. What really blows my mind is that they knew they were called to serve us, to give us a view of God and His interaction with man, to give us words upon which we will be able to base our lives; they knew it was all about us. They labored and toiled and suffered in order to serve us. How fascinating. They must have been bewildered as to who we were that God would extend to us such amazing grace.

Keep in mind, this passage is giving us more understanding about this “salvation” we have been given—this freedom from the oppression of the *Old Sinful Nature*. They clearly did not understand it and it could not fit into their minds how God would have so much grace on a group of people that were for the most part not even Jews. They had no idea that the Holy Spirit would take up permanent residence in our souls. It was all too much for their minds to conceive: God as a man and then to follow up that act with God in man; whoa, that was way too much to comprehend. But they longed to know the who, the what, the when, and the why. They made careful searches and inquiries into all that God had revealed, but they did not comprehend it.

Did you notice that they were studying the predictions regarding the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow? This is because the sufferings of Christ are what made this glorious salvation even possible. His death and resurrection gave us our life; as such our death (experienced through our sufferings or our trials)

enables us to live this life as men and women who have resurrected from the dead. When I say our “death” I am talking about employing this salvation, learning through our sufferings how to kill our connection to our *Old Sinful Nature* and live only from what the Spirit provides. Thus, when we get this truth, when we accept this truth, we will live as children of God, as Jesus’ bride, as those who have His glorious joy within our being, as those who have been sent on a mission from God to this world yet having no stake in this world. We will live as separated people who are singularly fixed on only doing what our Father tells us to do, saying only what He tells us to say, and going only where He instructs us to go. That is it.

The Spirit then wants us to understand that this salvation and the glories to follow have been announced to us, through those who preached the gospel, by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. In other words, you were that important to God that He ensured that His Spirit was sent to make sure that you, out of the billions, would hear the truth of God’s love for you. The Godhead, in the person of the Holy Spirit, invades time and space and uses normal people (just like you and me) to wake us up from the dead. This is the reality of so few people, but it is your reality. That is how awesome you are to God. Again, He wants you to get this, to understand this, to own it, and to live it. You belong to Him.

Finally, the Spirit makes this little point that these are things into which angels long to look or literally, in the Greek, to bend down to gain a clear glimpse. It is kind of like the picture we have of the angels on the mercy seat of the ark of God. They are bent down and are peering into this place of mercy where God meets His people.



Things into which angels long to look; that is a very strange statement. After all, the angels are all about ministering to us on behalf of God; you would think they would understand. But “long” is in the *present active indicative*. Even right now, the angels that surround this place want to understand this salvation that has been given to us. You see, they were objects of God’s creation, just like us, but salvation was not extended to them. When a portion of their ranks sinned, they were permanently stricken from glory. There was no grace; there was no mercy; there was no redemption. Yet for us, for silly, weak, and frail humans who fail over and over and over again, He has given us grace, He has given us mercy, He has given us redemption, and we have been set apart for His glory. The angels want to know why? Why not them, why us? We sure have not deserved it.

From their perspective, they are far more powerful and glorious than we are; which, by the way, is why the Jews used to worship and exalt angels. They thought that next to God there was no one higher. Boy how mistaken they were. This also explains why the fallen angels have such hostility toward us and are always coming against us with their hate and animosity. They are jealous and there is nothing they can do about it.

But here is the issue; the angels have been created to serve whereas we have been created to rule. **1 Corinthians 6:3** says that we will judge the angels and we know we will sit with Jesus on His throne as He sits with His Father on His throne (**Revelation 3:21**). And more than that, according to **Hebrews 1:14** and **Psalms 91:9-12**, the angels have been created to serve us and minister to us. You see they are servants of God; in contrast, we are friends of God. **John 15:15**, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." We also read about this in **Psalms 25:14** where the Spirit reveals that the Lord is friends with those who truly fear Him and with His friends He reveals His secrets.

They don't get to fully understand these things, they don't get to know what their master is doing, but they long to. They have been created by God, but one day we will be translated in to God's very nature and will be one with Him just as Jesus is one with the Father (**John 17:22-23**). How amazing is that. What does that say about your identity and worth? Please, let this sink into your soul and let it affect your thoughts and your emotions.

Get this, the angels have to learn about the grace of God through watching us and examining how the Father deals with us, how the Son pleads and intercedes for us, and how the Spirit guides us and enables us. In **1 Corinthians 4:9** and **Ephesians 3:10** it is clear that our lives are on display for all of the heavenly rulers and authorities in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through us, through the church, to them. Again we lead and like the saints of old who follow, the angels also must learn from us.

We are Jesus' friends; as such, we are privileged to know the things of God. We are privileged to have His salvation and to experience His salvation in our here and now. We have been given the ability, by the Holy Spirit of God who lives and abides in our lives, to choose to live in this salvation day-in-and-day-out. The Spirit is pleading with us to fully accept these truths. He wants us to live as aliens and experience the supernatural existence in the midst of this natural reality. That is why the Spirit is so adamant about this point and even contrasts our glory with the angels.

If we don't truly understand our reality, it is going to make it hard to understand the next part of the text where the Spirit starts to make practical application as to how we should live given who we are and all to which we are entitled. One always leads to the other: truth always leads to action. After all, our faith is all about actively believing (or living) the truth. We are not to live as spiritual paupers bound by the controls and the restrains of this world and our flesh; rather, we are to live—quite practically—as sons of the King.

Let's pray.