A Living Hope

Key Verse: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." —I Peter 1:8

Selected Scripture: I Peter 1:1-12

As an apostle, Peter first described his intended readers as "elect," which means that they are chosen by God in a particular and unique sense. (I Pet. 1:1,2) This wording was designed to strengthen and encourage them in their afflictions. Since he was divinely inspired, this portion has served to comfort all the Lord's consecrated followers from the time of the Early Church through the present.

Such comfort is in view of our reliance upon the efficacy of Christ's ransom sacrifice and our acceptance of sonship to the Heavenly Father. This is all based upon the hope that is within us to become joint-heirs with our Savior and ultimately, if faithful, live and reign with him to bless all the families of the earth.—Rev. 20:4; Gen. 12:3; 22:18

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—I Pet. 1:3-5

We especially rejoice in God's keeping power when we are beset by various trials, knowing that he will be with us as our faith is tested. "In this you greatly rejoice," Peter says, "though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." (vs. 6, *New King James Version*) Sometimes it is thought that a strong Christian will never be grieved in a trial. Yet Peter here tells us that there is a "need be" not only for the various trials, but more especially for being grieved itself. God has a purpose not only for the trial but also for the heavy anguish we may feel in the experience.

Our Key Verse affirms that although we have never literally seen Christ nor God, we love them abundantly. We do so because we realize they are with us and are waiting expectantly for us to complete our sacrificial course so that this night of sin will end. Then the promised blessings will ensue to mankind as predicted by all the holy prophets of the Old Testament.—Acts 3:21

Our standing before God furnishes us the opportunities of sacrifice and service as we participate in the sufferings of Christ. The fact that there are opportunities for suffering "for his body's sake" implies that it was the divine intention to give the church a share in the experiences that would enable them to serve as part of the royal priesthood in providing blessings to mankind during the kingdom. (Col. 1:24) In particular, the laying down of our lives on behalf of the brethren in the service of the Truth will prove the sincerity of the presentation of our bodies in sacrifice. —Rom. 12:1

The Lord credits faithfulness in bearing reproach, dishonor, exhaustion, and everything connected with sacrifice as our being a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel." (II Tim. 1:8) This is true provided such afflictions are the result of voluntary activity in his name and in the furtherance of his cause. What a privilege! ■