

Lesson 3: Salvation's Trials, and Final Joy (1 Peter 1:6-9)

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

In all four gospels, there are 192 verses where Jesus speaks directly about heaven, which makes up 10% of all the gospels referring to heaven. What should this say to us regarding our priorities in life? If Christ were always thinking and speaking about His kingdom, shouldn't we? As believers in Christ, chosen as His children, we have a salvation that is both here, and coming. While we walk here on Earth as exiled in the world, facing certain trials and great difficulties, we walk in the confidence of our justification. And yet we ought to be living for the coming kingdom of Christ, of which we will take part in with Christ for eternity. Here, in Peter's introductory remarks, he encourages the believers in Christ in their present adversity, considering the eternal security of which he had just spoken.

The salvation of our souls as believers does not come without a cost. We are to "rejoice" in our "various trials." This begs the question: What forms can trials come in, if there are various kinds of them? There are at least four different trials that are worth mentioning here. The first use of the word we'll find in Hebrews 3:7-8, **"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness.'"** The author of Hebrews is referring to a time in Israel's history where they had no home. They wandered about during this time, trying to make their way through life. They lacked position, power, and provision. They had no way to protect themselves, no allies, and they were left open to attack from any side on any given day. This time of testing, or trial, aligns perfectly well with Peter's readers. They all experienced the reality of being a stranger in a foreign land. They navigated through their days with uncertainty about their earthly future.

We see another type of trial in Luke 8:13, **"And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away."** One helpful observation to make about Luke 8:13, and our text, is that they both link "joy" with "testing." What separates the two texts is that Luke is speaking of unbelievers, and Peter is referencing believers. In both texts, the gospel is received with joy, only in Peter does the trial confirm the authenticity of salvation. Another observation we can make from this passage in Luke, is how the joy of salvation is tied to testing, they are a package deal. In fact, in Matthew's parallel account, he goes into greater detail saying, **"when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."** (Matt. 13:21) The fact of the matter is that anyone who professes faith in Christ will face persecution on account of that faith. Believers are not to be surprised when they go through trials simply because they trust in Christ and serve Him faithfully.

We find a third type of trial in Galatians 4:13-14, **"You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus."** Paul, on his first missionary journey, was ministering in Galatia. They saw Paul dragged out of the city to be stoned and left for dead. Fortunately for Paul, those saints in Galatia, and for us (as readers of the New Testament) Paul survived though bloody, beaten, and maimed. As we can well imagine, seeing someone that we love dearly

treated in such a fashion would be a great trial for us to endure. This type of trial was all too familiar for Peter's readers, and he will soon address this in his letter in 1 Peter 2:18-20, **"Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God."**

And finally, there is a fourth type of trial that we find in Matthew 26:41, **"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak."** Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood. His anguish over the cross He was about to go to was at such a high intensity that all He could do was pray, and yet the others slept. And so, Jesus rebukes Peter and the others for sleeping through such a time when they ought to have been desperately reaching to the Father for strength during this most certain, difficult trial.

In 1 Peter 5:8-9, Peter encourages the saints in the same manner that Christ encouraged him, **"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."**

I hope those four examples help us to understand what Peter means when he says that we endure **"various trials"** back in our text. There will be (1) trials in our life where we will be lacking in things such as our physical strength, or a loss of employment. Trials which show us the temporality of all physical things. (2) There will be trials where we will be persecuted to various degrees simply because of our connection with Christ. (3) There will be trials as we watch those whom we loved in their strength, begin to waste away unto their death. And (4), there will be trials where we are to recognize the reality of the present enemy that is deliberately attacking us, and we are to draw near to God in prayer to stand firm against him.

Five Purposes of Trials That Produce Confidence

Let's be honest, if we were authoring our own story, we would never write in trials. We tend to believe that our life would be perfect if we never went through trials ever again. This may be the first and only time when Jerry Seinfeld will ever be quoted in a Sunday School lesson, but I remember watching a clip once of a man who approached him on the street. Jerry was dismounting a bicycle at the building where he was filming. The man first annoyed Jerry by remarking that he chose to ride a bicycle when he could have driven a car. And then the man asked Jerry why he continued to work, considering he had amassed so much money he would be set for life. Jerry remarked, *"Why can't I work? Is your idea of a perfect life to just sit around and do nothing forever?"* Jerry's right, that is what people do. We fantasize about having so much money that we will never work again. We fantasize about finally reaching the retirement years. We fantasize about meeting the person of our dreams and having the perfect family. We dream about a life where nothing goes wrong...ever. Yet our God has us living a life where things go against the grain of our plans quite frequently. Things quite frequently pop-up that send us down a dirt road where we had planned on cruising down the highway for awhile. We accomplish all our budget goals, and the furnace breaks and depletes all our savings. We eat right and exercise, and cancer shows up unexpectedly. We enjoy the stability of our employment, only to find that the doors have closed one day, and we need to start all over again so late in our working life. And why does God allow those things in our life? Hopefully these five reasons will help us:

#1 – Trials Give us Confidence in our Inheritance

The first link that Peter gives us to our trials, is what he's just mentioned. The first two words of our text read, "**In this** (you rejoice)." So, while we are going through certain various trials, we ought to rejoice "**in this.**" What he is talking about is the inheritance that he's just said in verses 3-5. We are to greatly rejoice (*agalliao*), which is an intense, expressive term that means to be supremely and abundantly happy—a happiness that is not tentative nor based on circumstances or superficial feelings.

Our trials serve many purposes, but one of those purposes is to remind us that we aren't the ones writing our story, God is. We aren't supposed to find our ultimate joy and satisfaction in the things of the world. Our ultimate comfort isn't supposed to come from money, possessions, and people. There is one constant in our life that is unshakable and eternal, and that is our life with Christ. Christ is the sure and steady anchor of our lives.

#2 – Trials Give us Confidence in a Proven Faith

1 Peter 1:6b-7a, "**though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—**"

Nietzsche was famous for writing, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." There is a truth to that. We can all attest in our own lives to the truth that going through a difficult time taught us and shaped our character into what we are today. Long before there was a Nietzsche, there was a Peter who wrote truth as inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was Peter who said that our faith is proven through the fires of testing, and is strengthened by it, just like gold.

David Helm writes, "*A picture from ancient Roman times shows the method by which grain was threshed. One man can be seen stirring up sheaves, while another rides over them in a crude dray equipped with rollers instead of wheels. Attached to the rolling cylinders are sharp stones and rough bits of iron. As they grind over the recently tossed sheaves, the stones and iron help separate the husks from the grain. The simple cart was called a tribulum.*

This agrarian piece of farm machinery is the object from which we get our word tribulation. Do you ever feel as if you are under the inescapable weight and force of the tribulum? If so, Peter wants to remind you that no thresher ever operated his tribulum for the purpose of tearing up his sheaves. The thresher's intentions were far more elevated than that. The farmer only wanted to cull out the precious grain. And as it is with the ancient farmer, so it is with God.

Understanding that God's purposes for us include various trials is important, for by them we are tempered. The extracts of those world are removed from us, and we are made fit for Heaven. A simple bar of iron ore, pulled from the earth, might be worth \$5.00. However, that same bar, when made for horseshoes, would be worth \$10.50. If the owner decided to make the bar into needles for sewing, it could be worth as much as \$3,285. And if he turned it into springs for watches, its value could jump as high as \$250,000. What made the difference? Simply the amount of heat by which the iron bar was tempered and honed.

*What Peter is saying is that our faith is far more precious to God than a bar or iron. According to the text it is even more precious than gold! So be encouraged. You may find yourself on the anvil of suffering, but God is at work. He is testing the genuineness of your faith. And for him, that has eternal value.”*¹

God is the author of our trials. He is orchestrating them for our good. There are four elements of our trials that we should note from verse 6 that ought to encourage us as we go through them: (1) They are temporary, (2) they are necessary, (3) they hurt, and (4) they don't all look the same.

(1) – Trials are temporary, **“though now for a little while...”** Most of our trials are here today, and gone tomorrow, but sometimes our trials are chronic. It was the experience of these readers that they were being persecuted for their faith. Peter's word of encouragement to these believers facing chronic persecution is that it's only for a little while. The same can be said to those who battle chronic pain and illness. There is a finish line. This life, compared to the eternity with Christ we await, is incredibly short. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17, **“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”**

(2) – Trials are necessary, **“if necessary...”** I've heard Christians many times wonder if God is angry with them, and punishing them, as they go through a difficult time. People tend to relate to God in terms of an ATM: If I put in enough good works, they'll be sufficient funds to have good days. If I sin, they'll be no funds available, and I'll have bad days. Trials don't work that way. God always has a purpose in mind in our trials. In fact, John MacArthur gives us 6 reasons why trials are necessary:

- A) Trials humble us – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- B) Trials wean us away from the world and point us toward Heaven – John 16:33
- C) Trials teach us to value God's blessing as opposed to life's pain – 1 Peter 4:13, Rom. 8:17-18
- D) Trials enable us to help others – 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
- E) Trials chasten us for our sins – Hebrews 12:5-12, Luke 15:16-18
- F) Trials strengthen spiritual character – 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6, James 1:2-4

(3) – Trials hurt, **“you have been grieved...”** When we're going through difficult times, tears are appropriate. Sometimes we're hurting physically, sometimes emotionally. It's right to feel that emotion, we're not called to dull our senses, but we are called to draw nearer to God when those times come upon us. The pain is not the end. The pain is temporary, necessary, and intended to result in our glorifying God.

(4) – Our Trials don't look the same as everyone else's, **“by various trials.”** Our trials can't be predicted. They come randomly, they come in waves, they come to different degrees. But our God is sufficient to meet us at every trial to offer us help in our time of need. 1 Corinthians 10:13, **“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”**

1 Peter 1:7, **“So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire.”** When we take the time to examine just how purposeful trials are in our lives, it makes it much more difficult to have a grumbling attitude through them. Rather than trials diminishing our joy as we go through them, it produces more joy! How can it produce joy? By revealing

¹ Helm, David 1 & 2 Peter and Jude, p. 41-42 Crossway, 2008

the tested genuineness of our faith. Our trials, according to this text, put us through the fires of purification. Does God put us through trials in order to learn how we'll respond? Is God wondering whether or not we'll pass the test? Of course not. God is the author of true saving faith. No one can snatch His people out of His hand. (John 10:28) God always perfects the faith He began in His own. (Phil. 1:6) God isn't learning anything about us as we go through trials, but we are! We're the ones coming out of trials with a growing confidence in our faith in Christ. We're the ones who feel the roots of our faith digging deeper into the soil of the Lord as we grow stronger in our faith. Trials then become the catalyst for our joy in the Lord! We may lose health, but we have Christ! We may lose our employment, but we have Christ! We may be persecuted for His sake, but we still have Christ! We may suffer martyrdom for His name, but we still have Christ! Various trials can come upon us that bring us temporary pain and difficulty, but no trial can erase the love of God towards us. No trial can take away the eternal life with Christ that God has given to us.

#3 – Trials Give Us Confidence In Promised Honour

1 Peter 1:7b, **"may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."**

I find this verse to be mind-boggling. We worship the Lord. We attempt to give Him all of our praise, we seek to glorify Him, and honour Him with our every thought, word, and deed. But here in this verse, it speaks of God praising, glorifying and honouring us! What an inconceivable thought that believers would ever be found hearing those words from their Creator and Judge. What a testimony to the reconciling work of Christ on our behalf. Sinners who once stood outside of God's grace, who were under His due wrath, are now not only called His sons, but are receiving commendation from Him for how they handled the trials in their life. What a thought it is, to think that my thought process, my words, my actions during this trial in my life, pleases God so much that He'll praise me for it in the life to come. This is what Jesus referred to in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-23. Paul, likewise, speaking of this praise from God, said in Romans 2:29, **"But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God."**

Not only will we be praised by God in the next life for glorifying Him in our trials, but we'll also be glorified by Him! Let's look again at Romans 2, this time verses 6-7, and 10, **"He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life...but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek."** In this life, we glorify God by responding in a Christlike way. In the next life, God will glorify us by removing our sinful nature and giving us a sinless Christlikeness for eternity.

And not only will God praise and glorify us in the next life, but He will honour us too! Let's read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. There is a Heavenly reward that awaits those who have honoured God through their trials here on earth. They will be honoured by Him.

"At the revelation of Jesus Christ" refers to the second coming of Christ. This is the time when of rewarding judgment and commendation. When will the second coming occur according to the Bible? No one knows, but Peter is soon to say in 1 Peter 1:13, **"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."** Because the second coming could occur before this class is over, we need to remain alert, prepared to take action to glorify and honor Christ at a moments notice. Jesus also spoke to this readiness in Luke 12:35-37, **"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men**

who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”

#4 – Trials Give Us Confidence in a Personal Fellowship with Christ

1 Peter 1:8, **“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.”**

The love that the believer who has not seen God has is *agape* love. This love is directed by the will. It is a love that is self-sacrificing, that is unconditional. It is a love that willfully places yourself in harms way to protect the object of your affection. On Earth we see it echoed by a parents love toward a child. We ought to see it echoes by one spouse to another. But this love originates from God. 1 John 4:19 says, **“We love because He first loved us.”** As we consider the “How?”, and the “Why?” of God loving us, it teaches us how we are to reciprocate that love back to God, and towards each other. So we love the God we have not seen unconditionally, self-sacrificially, to make much of Him and have no consideration for our own glory. This is the love that Peter commends these believers for having.

Next, he commends the believers for believing in Him. Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29, **“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** There is something to be said about believing in someone. If I told my daughter, “I believe in you.” What assumption would you make about my relationship with my daughter? Well, you’d likely assume that I knew her well. I’m telling her that I know her character, and I know her potential, and based off of what I know, I am placing my confidence in her. That is, to a small degree, what we’re talking about here. Belief in the God we haven’t seen today is cheapened to simply acknowledging that God exists. Yet belief is so much more than that! To say we believe in Christ ought to hold the weight that says that we know Him through His inspired Word, and that our confidence is unshakeable in who He is, and what He has done! Believers ought to be those who abide in the Word of God, and who both love and trust the God that they fellowship deeply with.

The joy that fills the heart of the believer as they study the Word of God, and pray to Him without ceasing, is a compounding joy that feeds on itself and grows into greater love, and stronger trust. The joy ought to have moments of explosiveness in our hearts, as we just echo back praise and adoration to Him. Peter says that the joy **“is inexpressible and filled with glory.”** It is a joy that literally takes our breath away as we contemplate it. The love of God that flows out from our belief in Him is inexpressible, it is literally impossible to communicate well. We only attempt to glorify God with the highest praise we can muster. Our trials cause us to ponder that love of God in our lives that does not waver.

#5 – Trials Give Us Confidence in a Present Deliverance

1 Peter 1:9, **“obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”**

There is a real sense in which our salvation is future, when we are finally at home with Lord for eternity, with sin no more. But the tense in this verse is present. While we are going through trials today, we can hold fast to the outcome of our faith, our salvation. Our salvation from sin’s penalty and power are evident today. We’re no longer bound to sin as we were before we were in Christ. Paul says in Romans 6:18, **“and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”** Christ has set us free

from sin. We no longer have to carry around the guilt of past sins, knowing that Christ has covered them all. We are now free to obey Christ in righteousness during our trials. We are no longer condemned by God. We are no longer without hope in the world. We are no longer under His wrath. We are His! And our trials are designed by God for us to rest in the confidence that He is with us, and holds us secure in His hand!