

Trials and Our Faith

Standing alone... in an age of compromise convictions are tested by fire.

Peter's letter was written to bring encouragement to the scattered saints of Asia Minor. They were enduring many trials from persecution.

He says,

- 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,
- 7 so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 8 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,
- 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

(1 Peter 1:6-9)

After writing about their salvation Peter speaks to the persecuted saints about the trials they are facing. The test of trials comes to all who follow Christ.

How do believers endure persecution and trials for their faith in Christ?

Three key areas are addressed by Peter in this section:

Grief – Purpose – Joy

I. The Grief of Trials

Life this side of heaven includes trials.

...you have been distressed by various trials,

- **The Grief of trials**

Distressed Lupeo – “grief,”

Trials can be grievous, painful, discouraging.

God has created us with the capacity to grieve.

Jesus wept at the tomb of his dear friend, Lazarus.

Grieving is the way we heal on the inside.

The writer to the Hebrew Christians spoke of Jesus as their Great High Priest.

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:14-16)

Tempted - *Parasmas* – is also translated “trials”

Jesus understands what we go through by experience.

James writes about our struggles and God’s empathy,
 “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” (James 5:10-11).

Compassion and merciful – the empathy of the Lord

--to *climb into the skin of another* and feel through their feelings.

--Our trials are grievous to God.

Trials test our faith in God and are very grievous, often like a wound in our hearts. Jesus endures them with us. He feels our sorrows, griefs, and hurt.

We are not alone when we suffer.

Sorrow is the shadow of God’s hand.

Peter goes on to describe trials as varied:

- **Variety of Trials**

Various trials– *poikilos* – Lit. “*Many colored.*” – variety –

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

(James 1:2-3)

Later on in that chapter he uses the same word translated, *temptation*, Temptations are also varied trials.

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”

(v. 13)

Trials come in many forms and in many colors.
– the many faces of pain...

C. S. Lewis wrote in “The Problem of Pain”

“I’d like to continue writing about pain as soon as my toothache stops.”

Grief is common to all people.

Trials bring us grief... but they have purpose...

II. The Purpose of Trials

Trials have many benefits, many positive values.

– like a fund raiser to promote character:

Two Purposes: purity & perspective

Peter says,

7 so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1. The first purpose for trials is for purity.

We suffer trials so that our faith may be proven genuine.

Genuine faith is strengthened by trials.

Proof – dokimas – approval by fire - tested

Peter compares faith to gold. – a precious metal of great value and rarity.

The opposite– adokimas – is the word for

“unable to stand the test, worthless, insincere, phony, rejected.”

Wiersbe says,

“The sorrows of life do not create problems, they reveal them.”

Gold is proven/tested by fire.

When it is heated in a furnace by a goldsmith, the great heat removes the impurities. He knows when the gold is pure - when he can see his reflection in it.

So God watches over each trial we face as he removes the impurities in our lives through our suffering until our hearts reflect His likeness.

When Christ returns He will be looking for His character in us.

That character is produced by fire alone.

The Psalmist writes,

“For you have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined.”
(Ps. 66:11)

As the furnace superheats the silver (as with gold), impurities float to the surface and are removed, leaving pure metal. So trials purify our faith.

Trials aren't meant to defeat us, but to refine us.

2. The second purpose of trials is to impart perspective.

Peter says that the results of trials prove our faith – reveal it as genuine.

The end product is

...praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Paul writes,

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us...”

(Rom.8:18).

“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...” (2 Cor.4:17).

Paul describes his suffering in his 2nd letter to the Corinthian believers,

“...we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

(2 Cor. 4:8-11)

Peter's perspective is that while suffering is temporary,

the results of suffering have eternal benefits.

One pastor returned from Uganda after spending time with Christians who had suffered. Most of them lost several loved ones who were murdered due to

several uprisings. Many Christians have been martyred for their faith. Most believers lost everything they owned and were struggling for food and survival. Yet they were joyful in the midst of trials and hardships. The pastor said that he had never been among such genuinely joyful people in all of his life. The church he serves is very affluent. His members own everything money can buy, and yet have never shown the joy he observed in the lives of the suffering Christians of Uganda.

Spurgeon says,

There is a sweet joy that comes to us through sorrow.

III. The Joy of Trials

Peter's lesson on trials began with joy: In this you greatly rejoice, (v. 6)

- 8 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,

Joy in the midst of trials

We can experience authentic joy from God while we are in the middle of any trial. The joy of the Lord comes to us as we are in the deepest times of trials.

The joy of the Lord can shine through the tears that come into our lives.

How does that work?

It was illustrated in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego as they stood up to a king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. The king had an idea to build giant statue from a dream he had. When it was finished it was 90 feet tall. He put it on a cart and brought it to a specific location; where he commanded everyone to bow down and worship his statue under penalty of death to anyone who refused. Daniel records the response of his three friends,

Dan. 3:16-18

Faith in the Furnace.

Faith becomes a conviction when costs us.

So many have faith in a Sovereign God, belief in the Scriptures, but when faced with a choice to compromise or do the right thing, they failed to pay the price of obedience. It is only the grace of God that will bring us through.

Jesus was in the furnace with them.

When they came out of the furnace, the ropes that bound them were gone. They had been with Jesus. When we go through our fire, He will be with us.

The deep joy of any trial is the closeness of the Lord Jesus.

Trials grow believers in their relationship with God

Though unseen, we grow in love and joy for Jesus.
Through trials we experience Christ's comfort and grace and likeness.

Peter gives reasons to rejoice in trials:

we have a living hope,
a permanent inheritance,
a divine protection,
a developing faith,
an unseen Savior,
and a guaranteed deliverance. These truths may soften life's sharp edges.

Peter's adds one more thought: Final deliverance.

...obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (v. 9)

Our final victory is heaven – ultimate salvation.

Verse 13 says,

“...fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought
to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

I walked a mile with pleasure
She chattered all the way;
But left me none the wiser,
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But, Oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me.

Robert Browning Hamilton

Here's the good news: You don't have to pray for trials! (They will come to us.)

Learning to rejoice in trials means having an eternal perspective of faith.

Jesus' challenging invitation,

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeit himself?” (Luke 9:23-25)

On that day everything will make sense; for now, we walk by faith.

We don't need to understand; we just need to hold His hand.