

Subject: *The Trial of Your Faith*

Scripture: *1 Peter 1:6-9*

So far in this letter Peter has written to fellow believers about their present blessings and their future inheritance. As we look back over the opening verses Peter has described believers in eight ways:

- 1) Believers are strangers in this world (vs. 1)
- 2) Believers are scattered in this world (vs. 1)
- 3) Believers are selected by the Father (vs. 2)
- 4) Believers are sanctified by the Spirit (vs. 2)
- 5) Believers are sprinkled by the blood of Christ (vs. 2)
- 6) Believers have a second birth (vs. 3)
- 7) Believers have a special inheritance (vs. 4)
- 8) Believers have a secure salvation (vs. 4)

And now in our text Peter adds something else to that list of blessings.

- 9) Believers have suffering in this world (vs. 6-9)

This is one of the main themes in Peter's letter, the suffering of the saints. In verse 5, Peter writes that believers are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Now in verses 6-9, he tells us that faith will be tried and tested. He says they are in heaviness because of the trial of their faith.

1. All believers must live with trials

This is what John Newton wrote about in his song *Amazing Grace*.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come;

'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

- A. The nature of trials – The word for trials (temptations, vs. 6) refers to those things that test our faith. Real faith, genuine faith, saving faith will always pass the test.
- B. The difficulty of trials – Trials can be heavy, burdensome, and hard to endure. The Christian life is not all roses and no thorns. It's not all honey and bees. One man gave this testimony: "When I first trusted Christ I thought it would be the end of my troubles, and it was...the front end."
- C. The variety of trials – Peter refers to "manifold temptations." Manifold means many-sided, of different sources and kinds. In the gospels it is used of Christ's power over different kinds of diseases. Paul uses it in reference to different kinds of evil desires. Both James and Peter use it to describe different kinds of trials that people face. Trials come directly from God and sometimes from Satan (by permission of God as in the life of Job). Trials may come from friends or foes; they may come from people or circumstances. We may be tried by praise or criticism, by riches or poverty, by success or failure, by health or sickness. Trials come in all forms and at different times. There is one last thing to remember. Look at 1 Peter 4:10, where we find the same word, "the manifold grace of God," in the context of spiritual gifts. We have God's grace for every kind of ministry. And we have grace for every kind of trial.

- D. The duration of trials – “though now for a season,” that is, for a little while. Trials may seem like they last forever, but they never do. Compared with eternity, our time of testing is actually very short. It only lasts a little while, and this is something we need to always keep in mind. The writer of Hebrews encourages believers this way:

Hebrews 10:34-37 ³⁴ For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. ³⁵ Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence (repayment) of reward. ³⁶ For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. ³⁷ For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Trials may seem like they will never end, but they will. Trials are just for a season.

- E. The need for trials – They are sent by God or permitted by God only “if need be.” And they are needed. When they are needed, and for how long they are needed, and for how long they are needed, only God knows, and He always knows best.
- F. The purpose of trials – Trials accomplish two things. First of all, they reveal true faith. Trials prove that our faith is real. Genuine faith can always make it through the fire of testing. Second, they purify our faith. Trials purify our faith like fire purifies gold. Trials reveal faith and they purify faith. Augustine had both of these in mind when he wrote: “Just as fire does not damage gold, even so trials do not damage genuine faith.” We often sing the words of the old hymn, “How Firm a Foundation.”
- When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.*

2. All believers can rejoice in trials

As surprising as it may seem, Peter mentions rejoicing (vs. 6, 8) in connection with suffering and trials. The apostle James began his letter the same way:

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (various trials). Believers should respond to trials with joy, not because we enjoy suffering, but because we know that God uses trials to refine our faith and develop our character. Peter gives us three reasons to rejoice when we are going through trials.

- A. We rejoice because of our future inheritance – The word that begins verse 6, “wherein” takes us back to verses 4-5 that speak of our inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. We can rejoice when we’re tried because we know our inheritance is being preserved for us and we are being preserved for it.
- B. We rejoice because of future rewards associated with true faith – Peter refers to “the appearing of Jesus Christ.” The word “appearing” is means revelation or unveiling (same word as the Book of Revelation, *apokalupsis*). When Christ returns He will reward true believers in three ways: praise and honor and glory. Praise refers to what Christ will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Honor refers to our seat at the

heavenly banquet, “the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Glory refers to our glorified body and our home in heaven which is called “glory.”

Psalms 73:24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

C. We rejoice because of our connection with Christ – We are connected to Him in love and in faith (vs. 8-9). Though we haven’t seen Christ physically, we love Him. We see Him spiritually as He is revealed to us in Scripture and we love Him. And though we haven’t seen Him, we believe in Him. Believing without seeing is a special kind of faith.

John 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

We rejoice in Christ because by faith we are receiving the salvation of our souls. What could be better than that?