

Glorious Suffering

1 Peter 1:6-9

Joy in Suffering (1 Peter Series)

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

livinghopechurch.net

We're looking in our Bible **1 Peter 1:6-9**.

“For the believer in Jesus, every trial of suffering is an opportunity to grow in the faith, to grow in our relationship with the Lord, and to see Him work in our lives in a uniquely personal way that demonstrates His compassion, His comfort, His tender mercies, His loving kindnesses, His grace, and His endless love. Only God knows what each of us needs to experience and learn in order to be ‘conformed to the image of his Son.’ ”

~ T. A. McMahon

Introduction: The Chisel

One of my favorite stories I've told you is when someone once asked the great Renaissance sculptor Michelangelo what he saw when he approached a huge block of marble. Michelangelo stood back and looked at that big square block of white marble, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and replied, “I see a beautiful form trapped inside and it is my responsibility to take my mallet and chisel and chip away until the figure is set free.” I love that illustration because you can relate to it. God is forming “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (**Col 1:27**). The Spirit is forming Christ in us. Our Heavenly Father is a little like a sculptor. He wants to form his Son in us. He uses affliction like a hammer and trouble just like a chisel, and he chips and cuts away at us through trials to reveal Jesus' image in you. God chooses as his model his Son. **Romans 8:29** says: We born again believers are all “predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.”

I have lot of hard marble in my life that needs to be chipped away before Christ can be seen in me. We all have that marble. That hammer hurts, doesn't it? Those trials, that chisel bites! After time, the rough form begins to take shape.

What does this sculpture look like? God uses suffering to purge sin out of your life and strengthen your commitment to him, and force us to depend on his grace.

God uses affliction to:

- put your focus on the sufficient grace of Jesus
- transform your character to be like Jesus
- build compassion towards others who are hurting

That hammer and chisel makes you dig deep in God's Word to find comfort. The pain of God's hammer increases your faith and strengthens your character. And oh brothers and sisters, that is a beautiful image. That's Christ in you! Peter tells us we can rejoice in the midst of suffering.

Scripture

1 Peter 1:6-9, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 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. 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, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Grieved by Trials

Trials come in various ways. Personality conflicts in marriage. Loss of income. Loss of health. Retirement. The expectations and disappointments of people. People who once confessed Christ are going to fall away back into the world. This is happening at all times. Demas was with Paul as a close companion in ministry, but ended up forsaking the faith because he was "in love with this present evil world." So sad. Expect trials and testings.

Outline: Trials/suffering are necessary in the Christian life.

1. God's **promise** in our suffering: God is in control, vs. 1-6.
2. God's **purpose** for our suffering: God is growing us, vs. 6-7a
3. The **paradox** in our suffering: trials bring us closer to Jesus, vs. 8-9.

I. **The promise in our suffering: God is in control**, vs. 1-6.

Rejoicing

Yet Peter says in **1 Peter 1:6**, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if **necessary**, you have been grieved by various trials." What are we rejoicing in? In God's plan that he just explained in 1 Peter 1:1-5. You were dead in sin, but he caused you to be born again. It was a plan that he put into play in eternity past. You are chosen.

God is Leading and in Control

Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path."

David said of God in Psalm 23, "He leads me beside quiet waters. ... He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psa 23: 2-3).

And though we go through the valley of the shadow of death, God is "right there with us." He's got a plan. He's in control.

When God took **His people** into captivity in **Babylon** – what a trial – he said in **Jeremiah 29:11**, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God's Plan According to Peter

God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood" (vs. 2).

We rejoice in this: that God “3 ... has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

This is not a command but an observation. He's not saying “Rejoice,” but is saying this is what Christians do. This is an identifying marker. We are rejoicing “now” even though “now for a little while” we are suffering, being “grieved by various trials.”

The idea is continual here. You have been and are being “grieved by various trials” (vs. 6). It's like **2 Corinthians 6:10**, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” These are the same words in 1 Peter 1 – grieved (sorrowful) and rejoicing. Identical in the Greek.

How is this paradox possible? How can I rejoice even though I am filled with grief and sorrow?

- Your **child** has chosen the wrong path, yet you are rejoicing in Christ
- You have **suffered betrayal**, yet you are rejoicing in Christ
- Your **job** isn't what you thought it would be, yet rejoicing
- You have failed at times as a parent or as a spouse, yet you are rejoicing in Christ

Refined Faith

How is this possible? **1 Peter 1:7**, “so that the tested genuineness of your faith...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” God is refining your faith to be truly genuine. And this refined and tested faith of yours is “more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire.” That is, the more you refine gold through fire, the more precious it is. The more costly and valuable and rich it is.

Wrong Views of Suffering: Not retribution but formation

If we have the right expectations of the Christian life, we are better equipped to persevere in it. We are going to suffer in this life till Christ comes again. Suffering for Christ is temporary, but it will not let up in this life. Suffering is not a mistake, or even an expression of our Father's displeasure.

So there are some wrong views of suffering. We might think, suffering is only when I've been bad. God is punishing me. No! That's not correct thinking. There is no condemnation. All suffering in the Christian life is based on God's love.

Sometimes our views of discipline of children is messed up. We don't discipline children to punish them, but to correct them. We are forming their character. We love them. We are not giving them anything punitive. We are not inflicting retribution or vengeance. Our motive is rather corrective and edifying. We want our children to grow. So it is with God. The difference between retribution and correction is the difference between hate and love.

God loves you. Your suffering cannot be punitive. Christ was given the full retribution for your sin. Your suffering is formational. God is using your suffering to help you grow.

1. God is Sovereign and he determines if and when suffering is necessary.

We rejoice even though we are going through trials because of what we are becoming. **1 Peter 1:6-7**, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith [trust]—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.”

Peter says therefore that Christians will experience grief only as it is necessary in the light of God's great and infinitely wise purposes for them.

“A Little While”

Aren't you glad trials are only for “a little while”? That is another way of saying, “during the course of your short life.” You are going to suffer “multicolored” trails until you reach glory.

2. God is All Wise, and he has a perfect reason for your suffering.

He wants you to rejoice in his plan for you. In “this”? In what? Your suffering won't last, but the rich teaching in verses 1-5 will! This is Peter's plan of salvation. Theologians call this the “ordo salutis,” the order of salvation, or “the golden chain of redemption. It's Trinitarian in nature. The Father, Spirit and Son are all involved.

What is verses 1-5? We are elect! We are foreknown by God. Not merely foreseen, but foreloved! You are called into salvation. You are elected by the Father, Sanctified by the Spirit, and paid for by the Son. The Son of God, Jesus sprinkles you with the blood of His sacrifice!

This is why you rejoice in trials. It's because of the rich Biblical truths – what we call doctrine, or teaching – from the Bible. These truths are realities that you belong to another realm. You are an elect exile. You “rejoice in...” all the truths of verses 1-5. You are eternally loved by the Father. You are being set apart and sanctified by the Holy Spirit day by day! You are sprinkled and cleansed and forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Rejoice in your trials. They will not last, but your standing before God as a justified saint will!

3. God will carry you through your suffering.

Isaiah 43:1-3, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

II. The purpose in our suffering: God is growing us, vs. 6-7a

1. God is growing your faith through suffering.

We rejoice even though we are going through trials because of what we are becoming. **1 Peter 1:6-7, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your **faith** [*trust*]—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.”**

Notice, that at times deep, dark, difficult trials are “necessary” to test the “genuineness of your faith.” What is the nature of this testing? Is it that God needs to find something out? No! God is omniscient. This testing is for your sake and for the sake of the Body.

Most of you are members of this local body. Many of you are becoming members of this local church. Membership doesn't mean you are a true believer. We take a long time to interview and get to know you before we receive you. But as much as the elders test you, God is testing you through his ordained trials in life. Life is going to test the genuineness of your faith.

Your Faith is More Precious than Gold

“your **faith** [trust]—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire your **faith** [trust]—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire” (1 Pet 1:7). Gold is precious, and life gold, your faith gets more and more refined through fire. Your faith grows through the fire of suffering.

Sometimes I think, Why did God take my mother when I was a new Christian? Why did she have to die? It’s because my faith and trust in Christ is precious. He wanted to grow my faith.

Moses Slow Mouth

Exodus 4:11, Remember when God called Moses to be the Deliverer for his people in Egypt. And Moses said, “I am slow of speech!” God says in **Exodus 4:11**, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”

Some of you don’t realize, but your weaknesses and the things you might hate about yourself are really a blessing. They make you weak. They make you reliant on God.

Count it All Joy: Multicolored Trials

Remember what James told the Jerusalem saints who at the time were going terrible persecution from the Jewish community. Pastor James says in James 1:2-4.

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet **trials of various kinds**, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jms 1:2-4).

Peter says the same thing in **Peter 1:6**, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if **necessary**, you have been grieved by **various trials**...”

God is growing you through literally “multi-colored” trials.

What’s happening through these trials? God is refining and strengthening your faith, vs. 7, “so that the tested genuineness of your **faith** [trust]—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.” He’s preparing you for the Second Coming.

2. Your faith will bring Christ praise, honor and glory!

Butterfly Illustration – We want our trials to end immediately, but God will not allow that to happen. If you are saved I want you to think about the little boy who saw a butterfly struggling to emerge from its cocoon. It was straining with all it's might to get out, so the little boy thinking that he would help, took a knife, and slit the cocoon. But to his dismay, he found the butterfly came out with small and shriveled wings, and unable to fly. That’s what happens when we try to cut our time in the cocoon short. We have this fat body that cannot fly.

We need to let the cocoon of trials get all the ugly sinful habits out of us. God uses that cocoon to squeeze those sinful habits out so that when we emerge with wings, we can fly!

Getting us Ready to meet Jesus – because of what we are becoming. **1 Peter 1:6-7**, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if **necessary**, you have been grieved by **various trials**, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your **faith** [trust]...may be found to result in **praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Peter’s focus is not on Christians’ honoring God (though they will, cf. Mt 28:16–17), but on His commendation of them. God will grant believers **praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**. Incredibly, believers, who in this life are called to give honor to the

Lord always, can by their faithfulness in trials elicit **praise** from the Lord in the life to come. Near the conclusion of His parable of the talents, Jesus told the disciples,

“His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, “Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” (Mt 25:21–23)

The doctrine of Perseverance

The trials in life grow us so that at the coming of Jesus, our lives bear proof that He is our Savior, our Redeemer and our God.

Trials prove that God is doing a good work in you. Philippians 1:6, “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

III. The paradox in our suffering: the more we suffer, the more we know Christ, vs. 8-9.

Trials are the crucible that strengthen our relationship with Christ. **1 Peter 1:8-9**, “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, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**”

This is a paradox. You would think we would be growing farther and farther away from Christ because of pain, sorrow and suffering.

Sharing in Christ's Suffering

But instead, we are sharing in Christ's suffering. **1 Peter 4:13**, “But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”

1. We cannot see Christ, but we love him.

We cannot experience Christ with our eyes, but we are experiencing Christ, nonetheless. **1 Peter 1:8a**, “Though you have not seen him, you love him.”

Here and now, though we do not see him, we love him. It seems trials should blind us to Christ. In the world, suffering makes people bitter. But for the Christian focused on Christ, it makes us love him more.

2. We cannot see Christ, but we joyfully trust him.

We cannot experience Christ with our eyes, but we are experiencing Christ, nonetheless. **1 Peter 1:8-9**, “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, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**”

Inexpressible and Glorified Joy

The idea here is that in trials, we suffer with Christ and we have a joy that is not from this world. It is joy that is “inexpressible and glorified joy.”

Joy in expressible comes when you believe that he loves you. You have not seen him, but you love him. You are already obtaining the outcome of your faith – that relationship with him – the salvation of your soul!

3. We cannot see Christ, but we are obtaining the final product of Christ’s work: our salvation.

When we think of salvation, we often think of it in merely a forensic / judicial way. We are no longer condemned. We are justified. Amen!

But our salvation is really not merely a legal transaction, but that legal transaction results in a relationship. We are adopted into God’s family and we draw close to Christ.

Trials are the crucible that strengthen our relationship with Christ. **1 Peter 1:8-9**, “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, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

A Paradox: Obtaining Salvation

In trials, our soul is being transformed by our relationship with Jesus. He draws us closer and closer. This is a paradox. You would think we would be growing farther and farther away from Christ because of pain, sorrow and suffering.

Conclusion

So many times God has used trials for me. He knows what he is doing.

- My physical ailments – born premature. Eye problems ADHD
- My parents divorce
- My mothers’ death
- Difficulties on the mission field
- All have made me more like Christ

God is Working on Us

These trials are difficult, like a chisel hitting us! One day, His work will be finished. One day Christ will come again and take His bride away.

One day the church is going to forever put off the garments of sin. We will meet Christ in the air. We will put off suffering and difficulties and trials. We will put off our sinful flesh. As Revelation 21:2 says, we will come with Christ from “heaven... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

There will be no spot or wrinkle or any such thing! And we will all be changed into His glorious holy image! O come quickly Lord Jesus! Come and glorify your saints. Be exalted O Christ among us. We wait for you to come!