

## The Trial of Your Faith is Precious

1Pet 1:5-7

### Introduction:

1. 1Peter was written to suffering saints, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.
2. Peter writes this epistle to encourage them spiritually
  - a. We all need encouragement from time to time
  - b. Peter, of all of the apostles knew what it was like to be discouraged.
3. Peter, as you know, was a colorful individual – He is always mentioned first among the lists of the apostles, and served as a spokesman for them.
4. Many times Peter opened his mouth only to put his foot in it, yet strangely enough, the Lord loved Peter dearly!
5. No doubt Peter was a large, strong man, but the Lord had melted his heart.
6. Peter, having experienced many times of disappointment and discouragement, now reaches out to encourage these suffering saints who are scattered and discouraged.
7. 5x Peter uses the word “Precious” in 1 & 2 Peter.
8. This is a strange word coming from a fisherman – yet it is a word of great encouragement to those who have been discouraged.
9. What is most Precious to YOU? I love all women, but there is just one woman that I call “Precious” – my wife.
10. There are some facts we should know about Trials: (vs. 6)  
“I commissioned a national survey and asked people what question they’d ask if they could only ask God one thing. The Number One response was: “Why is there suffering in the world?” Interesting, I found statistical quirk: people who are married were much more likely to want to know why there’s so much suffering. (Lee Strobel- “Why Suffering”)

### **I. Trials Meet Our Needs – “If need be”**

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, **if need be**, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1. Notice Peter’s phrase, “if need be”
2. There are special times when God knows we need to go through trials
  - a) *Sometimes because we have disobeyed God’s Word*
  - b) *Sometimes to prepare us for growth*

*c) Sometimes to prevent us from sinning.*

3. We do not always know the reason, but we can be sure that God does what is best.

4. American Christianity and suffering

Much of American Christianity thinks that following God is the way to avoid the pains of life. Some have even have gotten to the place that they think God's purpose is to make our lives carefree and void of any kind of suffering or discomfort. There is some truth in that if we follow God's path we can avoid a lot of sin's consequences and punishment. However, it is just as true that becoming a Christian will be a call to suffering. Jesus took up the cross and suffered in our place for our sins, but at times we must also take up the cross and suffer for the kingdom of God on earth in his place. Many American Christians, have avoided Bible scriptures on suffering.

## **II. Trails Are Varied – “manifold temptations”**

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1. Notice Peter uses the word “manifold”
2. This literally means “variegated; multicolored”
3. No matter what color our day is – whether a blue Monday or a gray Tuesday – God's grace is sufficient to meet the need
4. Trials are varied and God matches the trial to our strengths and needs.

## **III. Trials Are Not Easy – “heaviness”**

1. Peter uses the word “heaviness”
2. This literally means “to experience grief or pain”
3. It is the same word used to describe our Lord in Gethsemane
4. Make no mistake about it – trials are difficult to go through!
5. “In all fairness, if we ask the ‘Why me?’ question in regard to our burdens, we should also ask it in regard to our blessings. “We take for granted 100 days of perfect health, and then grumble about one day of aches and pains. We drive the freeway hundreds of times without incident, and then ask, ‘Why me?’ the one time we have a flat tire or engine trouble. How often do we say, ‘Why me?’ as we count our blessings? Rather than feeling sad about what we don't have, doesn't it make more sense to feel a kind of rollicking rejoicing over everything we do have?”

## **IV. Trials Are Controlled by God**

### **A. Trials Don't Last Forever**

1. "The greatest thing about trials is that they do not last forever!"
2. Someone has said, "When God allows His children to go through a furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat!"
3. Sometimes He has to reset the clock, but when we submit to Him, He does not allow us to suffer one minute too long.
4. The ultimate purpose of such trials is to bring praise and honour and glory to Christ! (vs. 7)
5. No wonder Peter states that the Trials of our faith are Precious.
6. May God help us to learn that complaining and murmuring do not bring praise and honor and glory to God.
7. IF others see us do these things, what difference is there between us and those without Christ?
8. By the trials of our faith, we are more conformed to the image of God's dear Son – we become more dependent upon Him Who has enabled us to be victorious in the past.

### **B. Trials Affords Us the Opportunity to Grow**

**Ja 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.**

**Rom 5:3 We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

1. It's like the old saying — "No pain, no gain."
2. It is through affliction and suffering that the greatest lessons of life are learned.
3. This truth is echoed by some of history's great preachers.
4. And the great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon said, "They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls"
5. Annie Johnson Flint - Song Writer  
Consider the witness we give when we are faithful through suffering. My mind is drawn to Annie Johnson Flint, author of 6,000 hymns and gospel songs. She was an orphan. She lived with crippling arthritis. She was stricken with cancer. Yet her faith was especially evident in this hymn:  
He giveth more grace as the burdens grow greater  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

### **C. Trials Can Purify Our Faith – 1Pet 1:6-7**

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1. The Acid Test
  - a) *A severe trial is sometimes called an “acid test.” this term originated during times when gold was widely circulated.*
  - b) *Nitric acid was applied to an object of gold to see if it was genuine or not.*
  - c) *If it was fake, the acid decomposed it; if it was genuine, the gold was unaffected.*
2. In God’s view, our faith is “much more precious than gold,” and it too must be tested (1 Pet. 1:7).
  - a) *But these “acid tests” are positive ones.*
  - b) *The Lord is working to reveal genuine faith, not expose false faith*
3. Determine not to turn bitter, but to turn to God for peace and courage
  - a) *Gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off*
  - b) *As a result, during the time before Christ returns, God will purify his people through suffering or persecution*
4. Shaping the Stone

A famous evangelist told the following incident: “I have a friend who in a time of business recession lost his job, a sizable fortune, and his beautiful home. To add to his sorrow, his precious wife died; yet he tenaciously held to his faith—the only thing he had left. One day when he was out walking in search of employment, he stopped to watch some men who were doing stonework on a large church. One of them was chiseling a triangular piece of rock. ‘Where are you going to put that?’ he asked. The workman said, ‘Do you see that little opening up there near the spire? Well, I’m shaping this stone down here so that it will fit in up there.’ Tears filled my friend’s eyes as he walked away, for the Lord had spoken to him through that laborer whose words gave new meaning to his troubled situation.”

### **D. Trials Keeps This World from Becoming Too Attractive**

1. Suffering keeps this world from becoming too attractive to us and makes us look forward to our future home.
  - a) *Suffering prompts us to focus on the fact that life on earth is short and fleeting.*
  - b) *“How easy it is to ‘settle down’ in life in this world, and to live on the assumption that we are here forever” (Lloyd-Jones, 124).*
  - c) *“We are too busy making money, paying our bills, trying to*

*scramble to the top of the heap, and facing life's challenges in general... Our attention is fastened almost solely upon this world, and we give scarcely a thought to the next" -Dr. Ernest Pickering*

2. Paul's perspective of affliction was that it was temporal. Look beyond today's struggles to the end result!
  - a) *It's like the story that British church leader Galvin Reid tells about meeting a young man who had fallen down some stairs at the age of one and had shattered his back. He had been in and out of hospitals his whole life — and yet he made the astounding comment that he thinks God is fair.*
  - b) *Reid asked him, "How old are you?" The boy said, "Seventeen."*
  - c) *"How many years have you spend in hospitals?" he asked. The boy said, "Thirteen years."*
  - d) *The pastor said, "And you think that is fair?" The boy replied: "Well, God has all eternity to make it up to me."*

## **V. Trials Often Turns People to God**

### **A. Suffering Often Leads to Repentance**

1. Philosopher Peter Kreeft put it this way: "The meaning and purpose of suffering in history is that it leads to repentance.
2. Only after suffering, only after disaster, does Israel, do nations, do individuals turn back to God.
3. Suffering brings repentance. We learn the hard way.
4. As C.S. Lewis says: 'God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.'"
5. You know that's true. When we're happy and trouble-free, we forget God? Often it's when we suffer, when we experience heartache or loss or disappointment that we're more likely to turn to Him.
6. Suffering reveals our weakness, helplessness and powerlessness.
  - a) *When things are going well for us we think that we can pray, but it is only when the hardships come that we realize how weak and helpless we really are.*
  - b) *Many times we ask God to take away our problem(s), yet it may be His will for you to endure and persevere until the end.*

### **B. Even Believers Turn to God in a Fresh Way**

1. "Let's Roll." - These were the last words spoken by Todd beamer before meeting his Lord on September 11th, 2001.
2. His last known action was helping lead a passenger revolt against terrorists that hijacked United Flight 93 that was headed for Washington, D.C., probably to hit the White House.
3. In her book Lisa Beamer tells how she handled the news of her husbands death.

4. She said she felt as though time had come to an abrupt halt, and she no longer existed.
5. She was numb and for days struggled to deal with the shock.
6. She writes: “And yet in that dark moment of my soul, I first cried out to God. I knew without a doubt that my hope wasn’t based on Todd or any other human being. Nor was it based even on life itself, when I got right down to it. My faith wasn’t rooted in governments, religion, tall buildings, or frail people. Instead, my faith and my security were in God.”

## **VI. Trials Makes Us More Dependent on God**

**2Co 12:9** *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

1. “God often puts us in situations that are too much for us so that we will learn that no situation is too much for him” (Erwin W. Lutzer).
2. Paul says that God’s grace is sufficient.
  - a) *It is more than enough for our present circumstances at all times.*
  - b) *We do not need anything else.*
3. We should learn to appreciate suffering. It is then that we become the recipients of God’s great resource: His grace.
  - a) *Psalm 119:67 -- Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.*
  - b) *Psalm 119:71 -- It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

### Conclusion:

1. It seems strange that Peter calls the trial of our faith precious
2. We consider trials as terrible things and to be avoided
3. God can use the trials in our lives to perfect our faith and purify us