

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR TRIALS
1 Peter 1:6-7

1 Peter 1:3-9 is a thanksgiving to God for salvation in Christ. But there is a shift of emphasis at verse 6. Verses 3-5 focus on the believer's future expectations. Verse 3 says we are born again to a living hope. Verse 4 says we have received a guaranteed inheritance. And verse 5 says we have been guarded for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. Then verses 6-9 shift from the believer's future expectation to the believer's present experience. The tension is between the contrasting realities found in verses 3-5 and verses 6-7. Verses 3-5 declare Christians have hope. It is a heavenly hope, not a human hope. It is divine assurance, not wishful thinking. It is a living hope, not a dead or dying hope.

Christians have hope. But verses 6-7 declare we also have trials. In John 16:33, Jesus says, "In the world you will have tribulation." Acts 14:22 says "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Christians have trials. Peter does not say we have suffering, persecution, or tribulation. He says we have trials. This letter was written to Christians who faced growing religious intolerance. It would soon become genocidal persecution, when Nero determined to stamp out of Christianity from the Roman Empire. But Peter is not speaking about religious persecution here. He is talking about all the various burdens, challenges, and problems we face in life. Verse 6 indicates this by calling them various, diverse, or manifold trials.

It may be a physical trial, as pain, sickness, and disease afflict your body. It may be a relational trial. Your marriage is on the rocks. Your children are rebellious. Your parents just do not understand. Your loved-ones hurt you. Your friend betrays your trust. Or it may be a financial trial. You find yourself unemployed or underemployed. Your month is longer than your money. Your bills are behind. You are facing threats of repossession or foreclosure. Or it may be a spiritual trial. You are struggling with temptation. You are trying to break a sinful habit. You are serving in a difficult place. The word translated "various" was used for the weaving together of different colored threads to produce a garment. But there are many times when there seems to be no logical pattern to the trials of life. They come randomly, aimlessly, and chaotically. You get bad news from the doctor. Then your job is in jeopardy. Then your family starts tripping. If it ain't one thing it's another.

We face contrasting realities – hope and trials. But we face them with a common response. Verses 3-5 exhort to praise God for our salvation. Verses 6-7 exhort us to praise God in our sufferings. Verses 3-5 instruct us to praise God because of. Verses 6-7 instruct us to praise God in spite of. Verse 3-5 bids us to rejoice when we think of how good God is. Verses 6-7 bid us to continue to rejoice when we think about how bad life is. This is the real hope Peter offers to troubled Christians: You still have so much to praise God for, even when you are going through the various trials of life. The Puritan commentator, MATTHEW HENRY, was robbed one day. He later journaled reminders to be thankful: "Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not

much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.” This is the attitude toward life that our text calls for. In spite of it all, you still have so much to praise God for. 1 Peter 1:6-7 teaches five important truths about the trials we inevitably face as followers of Jesus Christ.

I. THE PROPER RESPONSE TO YOUR TRIALS

Chippie the parakeet was a happy bird. He would sit in his cage singing all day, until his owner decided to clean his cage with her vacuum. She stuck the hose into his cage. But when the ringing phone distracted her, Chippie was suck into the vacuum. When she rescued him, he was covered with dust and dirt. So she turned on the faucet and stuck Chippie under it. When she finished rinsing him off, Chippie was obviously cold and wet. So she got her blow dryer to dry him off and warm him up. Chippie survived. But he never sung again, because it is hard to sing after you have been sucked in, washed over, and blown away. Yet Peter says those who have been saved can sing, even when life sucks you in, washes you over, and blows you away.

Verse 3 says, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.” Genuine faith is authenticated by your response to trials. Anyone can act spiritual for ninety-minutes on Sunday morning. The real test is not how you act in worship on Sunday mornings but how you react to life the rest of the week. Peter affirms one of the wonderful benefits of the Christian life: the power to choose your response. I may not have control of what happens to me. But I can control how I respond. I can be kind to those who are mean to me. I can forgive those who hurt me. I can love those who hate me. I can bless those that curse me. I can pray for those who persecute me. When things go wrong, I do not have to go with them. I can choose my response.

Verse 3 says, “In this you rejoice...” The word “rejoice” literally means “much leaping.” The NKJV translates it: “greatly rejoice.” It is a uniquely Christian term that is rooted in the goodness and faithfulness and sovereignty of God. Christians – and only Christians – can leap for joy when they burdened by various trials. In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus says, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” This word “rejoice” is an indicative, not an imperative. It is not a command to obey. It is a description of reality. It does not describe the way things should be. It describes the way things are. And it is in a grammatical emphasis that denotes continual action. When your joy is rooted in God, it will not be sporadic, emotional, or reactionary. Christian joy can rejoice through it all.

Christian joy is something radically different than happiness. Happiness is thing-centered or people-centered or event-centered. But if your happiness is based on things or people or events, it never takes much for you to become unhappy. Christian joy can lose what is valuable, face the rejection of those you care about, and endure dramatic change of circumstances and yet declare, “I still have a reason to rejoice.” We are born again to a living hope. We are beneficiaries of a guaranteed

inheritance. We are being guarded by the power of God for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. So verse 6 says, “In this we rejoice, though now for a little – if necessary – you have been grieved by various trials.” The proper response to our trials is to rejoice. Psalm 34:1 says, “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” James 1:2 says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.”

II. THE LIMITED DURATION OF YOUR TRIALS

Verse 6 says, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while...” Note the two time references Peter uses here: “now” and “for a little while.” “Now” stands in tension with verses 3-5, which focuses on the believer’s future expectation. Verse 3 says we are born again to a living hope. Verse 4 says we have received a guaranteed inheritance. And verse 5 says we are being kept by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Christians have assurance for the future. So we do not fall apart over what is happening to us now. Have you ever read a book and came to a chapter that confused or troubled or disturbed you? So you cheated and went to the back of the book to see how it was going to turn out. Then you went back to your place in the story with a different attitude, because you knew the difficult chapter is not the end of the story. Christians should not lose our joy in difficult chapters in life. We have read the back of the book. We know how the story is going to end. We know that the trials of life are just for now.

Verse 3 says, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while.” Our present trials are not permanent trials. Our trials have a limited duration. Our trials have an expiration date. Our trials have a pay or quit deadline. When the old deacon was asked his favorite verse in the Bible, he answered that he loved any verse that says, “And it came to pass.” This is the truth about your trial. It did not come to stay. It came to pass. Trouble does not last always. Your present trial is not your final destination. It’s just a layover. I hate layovers. But I recognize they are necessary. Sometimes there is not enough gas on the plane to get you to your final destination. Sometimes there are people on board who are not going the whole way with you. Sometimes there is baggage on board that needs to be removed. So layovers are necessary to get your final destination. We can rejoice in our trials because we recognize they only have a limited duration. WARREN WIERSBE comments: “When God permits his children to go through the furnace, he keeps his eye on the clock and his hand on the thermostat. If we rebel, he may have to reset the clock; but if we submit, he will not permit us to suffer one minute too long. The important thing is that we learn the lesson he wants to teach us and that we bring glory to him alone.”

Verse 3 says, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while...” This verse is not a guarantee that your trial will be brief or short or fleet. Peter was no Word-of-Faith teach, presumptuously assuring his naïve congregation their breakthrough was coming in a few days. Many of Peter’s readers would not see the end of their

trials on earth. They would have to deal with the trial for the rest of their lives. Yet Peter still says it is just now for a little while. Can I be honest with you?

- Your unfulfilling marriage may never get better.
- Your lonely season of singleness may be permanent.
- Your prognosis for recovery from sickness may not improve.
- Your financial breakthrough may never happen.
- You suffering for doing what is right may never relent.

But if you are saved, you still have something to rejoice about. WILLIAM BARCLAY wrote: "It is one of the basic facts of life that a man can endure anything so long as he has something to look forward to – and the Christian can look forward to the ultimate joy." We rejoice because we know the limited duration of our trials. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

III. THE SPIRITUAL NECESSITY OF YOUR TRIALS

Verse 6 says, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials." Note the providential occasion on which trials come into our lives: "if necessary." The KJV says, "If need be." Trials only come on a need-be basis: "if necessary." The word "if" is in the 3rd class, which is a true condition. There is no assumption one way or another. Trials only come into your life if and or when God deems them to be necessary. The trials of life are not automatic or accidental or arbitrary. They only come when it is spiritually necessary. You can rejoice in your trials because there is purpose in your pain.

You may be thinking, "Please, tell me why I am going through!" Answer: I don't know. God rarely explains what he is up to in our lives. God is sovereign and does not have to explain himself. And because God is God and we are not, if God explained what he is up to in our lives, it would not make sense to us. Life is lived forward, but it is understood backwards. So even though you do not understand it all, trust God and hold fast to Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." What is the purpose Paul speaks of here? Romans 8:29 says, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." This is God's singular purpose for your life: that you be conformed to the image of his Son. It is the will of God to have the Spirit of God use the word of God to make the child of God look like the Son of God.

To make us look like Jesus, it may require you to go through a trial. But it may not be necessary. The hymn What A Friend We Have in Jesus says:

OH WHAT PEACE WE OFTEN FORFEIT,
OH WHAT NEEDLESS PAINS WE BEAR

I accept the fact that some pain in life is inevitable. But I do not want to go through “needless pains.” When I was a boy, my primary Sunday School teacher would pray for me in class that I would not have a prodigal son experience. Initially, I thought she was just picking on me, because I was the preacher’s kid. When I asked her about it, she told me that I had experienced the goodness of God at a young age. And she did not want me to have to go to the “far country” to know how good I had it. Decades later I have not outgrown this prayer. Neither have you. Remember the prodigal asked for his inheritance and went to the far country and spent it all. When he hit rock bottom, he came to himself and recognized how good his father was. But the father had not just started being good. He had been good all along. It just took a trial for him to see how good he had it. May it now take that for you. Praise God for his goodness no matter what you feel about your circumstances.

IV. THE PAINFUL REALITY OF YOUR TRIALS

Verse 6 says, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.” The word “grieved” means to be in pain or sorrow or heaviness. It speaks of one’s personal, emotional, subjective response to life’s trials. The term is used in Matthew 16:22 to describe the sorrow of the rich young ruler who rejected the Lord’s call to discipleship, because he could not let go of his material possessions. It is used in Matthew 26:22 to describe the sorrow of the disciples when Jesus announced that one of them would betray him. It was used in Matthew 26:37 to describe the sorrow of Jesus as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is also used in Ephesians 4:30, where Paul exhorts, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” And it is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, where Paul says, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” Peter uses the term here to describe the painful reality of your trials: “you have been grieved by various trials.”

Christians are people who live with hope. We are also people who must live through trials. And the text makes it clear what it means when it speaks of trials by saying they grieve us. Trials hurt. That’s how you know you are going through a trial. It is not a trial you can easily move or think or speak or work or pay your way out of. A trial is a painful situation you would change if you could, you tried and you can’t. And there is nothing holy or spiritual or righteous about pretending that life does not hurt when life hurts. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says that we should not sorrow as those who have no hope. Paul does not say we should not be in sorrow. He says we should not sorrow as if all hope is gone or God is not on the throne or Jesus is did not rise from the dead.

We are grieved by trials. But we are grieved by various or diverse or manifold trials. The Greek word literally means “multicolored.” It was used to refer to the spots on a leopard. It was also used to describe the weaving together of different colored threads to make one garment. In fact, it was used in the Septuagint

to describe Joseph's coat of many colors. Peter uses the word here and in 1 Peter 4:10: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." The word Peter uses for various trials is the same word he uses for varied grace. Connect the dots. The good news of life's painful realities is that God has multicolored grace to match our multicolored trials. 1 Peter 5:10 calls God "the God of all grace." It does not matter what your trial may be, God has grace to match any painful situation you may go through.

- God has habit-breaking grace.
- God has decision-making grace.
- God has body-healing grace.
- God has broken heart-mending grace.
- God has marriage restoring grace.
- God has need-providing grace.
- God has job-opening grace.

THROUGH MANY DANGERS, TOILS, AND SNARES
I HAVE ALREADY COME;
TIS GRACE THAT BROUGHT ME SAFE THUS FAR
AND GRACE WILL LEAD ME HOME.

V. THE INTENDED RESULT OF YOUR TRIALS

In verse 6, Peter states the fact that believers will go through various trials. In verse 7, Peter states the reason why believers go through various trials: "so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes through it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This verse states the twofold purpose of your trials.

A. THE REFINEMENT OF YOUR FAITH

Verse 7 says you go through trials for the sake of "the tested genuineness of your faith." "Tested genuineness" translates a term used for assaying metals to ensure it is what it appears to be. God sends trials to test the genuineness of your faith. There is a difference between said faith and true faith. There is a difference the profession of faith and the possession of faith. There is a difference between a dead religion and a living relationship. And the difference often cannot be distinguished until you go through a trial. You do not know what you really believe until your faith is on the line. You do not know how deep your roots are until the wind starts blowing. You do not know how strong your anchor is until you get in a storm. WARREN WIERSBE said it well: "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted."

God sends trials to prove your faith. He also sends trials to purify your faith. Verse 7 says: "that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire..." When a miner finds ore, it has dirt and impurities on it. So he starts a fire and sets a pot of water on it. Then he places the ore in the boiling water. The heat causes the impurities to rise to the surface, and

the miner scoops it off. And he knows that the gold is pure when he looks into the pot of water and can see the reflection of his face in the water. When God saved you, you had a lot of dirt on you. You were precious. But you were not pure. So he has to put you in the fire sometimes to burn off the things that are not like Christ.

B. THE REWARDING OF YOUR FAITH

Listen again to what verse 7 says about the intended result of your faith: “so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes through it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The reference to “the revelation of Jesus Christ” points to his Second Coming. But this reference to praise and glory and honor do not. Indeed, Christ will receive praise and glory and honor at his revelation. But that is not what Peter is saying. The praise and glory and honor mentioned here will be for you, not Christ. If you remain faithful when your faith is tested in the fire, your faith will be rewarded. You will receive praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And it will not be from men. It will be from God himself. Matthew 25:21 and 23 may be the best description of what that day will look like. The master commends his servants by saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” In the final inspection, the Lord will not look for perfection from your life. He will look at the direction of your life. You are not perfect. But you can be good and faithful. The good and faithful servant will hear the master say, “Well done!”

**IF WHEN YOU GIVE THE BEST OF YOUR SERVICE,
TELLING THE WORLD THAT THE SAVIOR HAS COME;
BE NOT DISMAYED WHEN MEN DON'T BELIEVE YOU;
HE UNDERSTANDS, HE'LL SAY, "WELL DONE."**

**BUT IF YOU TRY AND FAIL IN YOUR TRYING,
HANDS SORE AND SCARRED FROM THE WORK YOU'VE BEGUN
TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND RUN QUICKLY TO MEET HIM;
HE'LL UNDERSTAND, "HE'LL SAY, "WELL DONE."**

**OH, WHEN I COME TO THE END OF MY JOURNEY
WEARY OF LIFE AND THE BATTLE IS WON;
CARRYING THE STAFF AND THE CROSS OF REDEMPTION
HE'LL UNDERSTAND, AND SAY, "WELL DONE."**