

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRIALS
1 Peter 1:6-9 (1 Peter – Wk 3)
By Andy Manning

The title of this sermon is “The Truth About Trials.”

Trials will either make you better or they will make you better. They will either destroy you and make you stronger.

And that all depends on how you view trials. How you view trials will determine how you respond to them, and whether trials make you better or bitter.

In life, you can’t determine what happens to you. But what happens to you is not what determines your level of happiness and success in life. It’s your response that matters. And your response to trials will depend on how you view trials.

Some people think that God is supposed to keep them out of trouble; or that signing up to follow Jesus means that Jesus is supposed to guard you from problems, and if you have enough faith and devotion you should only experience health, wealth, and prosperity.

But that is not the Biblical truth about trials. The truth is that Christians experience problems, too. It doesn’t matter how much faith you have. It doesn’t matter how devoted you are. You will face trials.

But the Bible has some exciting, encouraging news about trials (a word that means test, adversity, or trouble).

And when you understand what the Bible says about trials, then you will look at problems in an entirely different way. And that’s what we’re going to see today: The truth about trials.

Let’s turn to **1 Peter 1:6-9 (CSB)**. This is week 3 of our study through 1 Peter. Let’s read.

6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials 7 so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This passage reveals four important truths about trials.

4 Truths About Trials

1. Trials should not steal a Christian's joy.

Look at **verse 6**. “You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials.”

Peter is writing to Christians, and he says that even though you are experiencing trials, you rejoice. In other words, trials should not steal a Christian's joy.

Now don't get me wrong. The book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a time for everything. So I'm not saying that it's wrong to cry or to be sad when you suffer or are faced with a tragedy or a setback of some sort.

But at the same time, Peter says here that we can rejoice even though we suffer trials.

Paul even goes so far as to command Christians three times in the book of Philippians to rejoice in the Lord; in fact, Philippians 4:4 commands us to “rejoice in the Lord always.” In all circumstances.

So on the one hand it's okay to be sad, or to cry, to mourn, to weep over trials. But on the other hand, we're called to rejoice in the Lord always.

How do we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory truths? **Christians experience moments of sadness, but a lifetime of joy.** In other words, as a Christian you will have moments, or short periods of sadness and grief over trials. But then you bounce back to your regular attitude and feeling and countenance of joy – of rejoicing, and happiness, and celebration.

Why? Why do Christians rejoice, even though we suffer trials? 5 Reasons.

First, because we can look forward to salvation.

That's what Peter is referring to in verse 6 when he says, "You rejoice in this." What is this? In verses 3-5 he praised God for our salvation, specifically the fact that we are heaven-bound, and that our salvation is secure.

So as Christians, we can rejoice even in the midst of trials because we know that we are on our way to heaven where there will be no trials for all eternity.

Second, we can rejoice in the midst of trials because we know that they are only temporary.

Peter mentions this in **verse 6** as well. "You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials."

Even if you live to the ripe old age of 90, that's still a relatively short amount of time compared to eternity, and then we get to go to heaven. And since life is short, we can endure anything. We can endure any trial because it's only temporary, it's only going to last for a short time, and then we get to go to heaven.

Third, we can rejoice in the midst of our trials because the Holy Spirit enables us to have joy.

Galatians 5:22-23 says that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. If you are a Christian, then the Holy Spirit is living inside of you, empowering you to be joyful in all circumstances. God always empowers us to do what He calls us to (Phil 2:13).

Fourth, we can rejoice in the midst of trials because we have the pleasure of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

When you have a close, healthy relationship with God, the result is joy.

Psalm 16:11 (CSB) says, “You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.” Just walking with Christ produces so much joy that it overshadows the temporary sadness of trials.

Fifth, we can rejoice in the midst of trials because we have faith that God is in charge, and God loves us.

And that means that nothing can happen to us unless God allows it, and if He allows it, He will use it for our good (Rm 8:28).

So the first truth about trials presented in this passage is that trials should not steal a Christian’s joy.

Moments of sadness? Yes. But overall, the Christian should have an attitude, a feeling, a countenance of joy.

To put it negatively, if you are a professing Christian and you have a persistent, ongoing, perpetual attitude and feeling and countenance of negativity, sadness, depression, then something is wrong.

Either your faith is weak; or your perspective is wrong; or your Biblical knowledge is lacking; or your relationship with God is not right.

2. Trials are intended to reveal the quality of your faith.

Let's look at verses 6-7. "6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials 7 so that the proven character of your faith."

This verse tells us why God allows us to experience trials.

"... You suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith..."

Trials are intended to prove, or to test, the character, or the quality of your faith.

In other words, trials are intended to reveal the quality of your faith, your spiritual maturity.

How do trials reveal the quality of our faith?

You can't tell how strong you are in your faith when life is great.

When life is great, when the bills are paid, when your relationships are good, when everybody's healthy, when you like your job, when everyone is happy with you, it's easy to be nice, and loving, and joyful, and spiritual. It's easy to say, "God is good. God is in control. God loves me."

It's hard to see the quality of your faith. It's hard to see your strengths and weaknesses.

That's why trials are valuable. Because **who you are when you face trials is who you really are.**

When you go through trials, all of your weaknesses become apparent.

Look at verse 7. "So that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire."

Peter compares trials to the **gold-refining process**.

In order to purify or refine gold – to remove the dross – they heat it up to a very high temperature so that it turns to liquid. And as it gets extremely hot, the impurities – the dross – rise to the surface.

That's what trials do for us. When we go through trials, it's like God turns up the heat on our faith, and the impurities in our life, our weaknesses and flaws and immaturities rise to the surface and become visible.

The word "**sincere**" in the Bible literally means "without hypocrisy"; the ancient Latins had a marketplace expression **sin cera**, from which we get our word "sincere." When pottery makers wanted to advertise the quality of their products, they would label them sin cera, which meant "without wax." Dishonest potters would trick customers by filling in the cracks with wax to hide the flaws. When the pots were heated, the cracks were revealed.

That's what trials do. It reveals the cracks in our faith and character.

Why does God use trials to reveal the quality of our faith?

It's not for God. God already knows everything.

God uses trials to reveal the quality of your faith to teach you something; so that you can see your weaknesses.

So when you go through trials, these are the kinds of things that you need to look for.

Do you run to God or away from God?

Do you drop out of church or lean on your church family for support?

Do you hide your problems or share them with confidants?

Do you try to solve your problems with sin, or do you trust God to meet your needs?

Do you try to comfort yourself with sin?

Do you get angry with God?

Do you get mean?

Do you get depressed and lose your joy?

Do you get consumed with worry?

These are all signs that your faith, your relationship with God is weak and immature.

Why does God want you to see your weaknesses? That brings us to the next truth about trials.

3. Trials are intended to grow us.

Why does God want us to see our weaknesses and impurities?

It's not just that He wants us to *know* our weaknesses.

He wants us to know our weaknesses so that we can work on them and *grow*.

It's not for our knowing, but for our growing.

Go back to the gold-refining process.

What's the point of heating up the gold? To bring the impurities to the surface.

Why do you want to bring the dross – the impurities to the surface? Not just so that you can see it. The purpose of the refining process is to purify the gold.

And it's the same with us. The purpose of trials is to purify us; to grow us in Christ; to make us stronger, and more glorifying to God, and more useful to God.

In other words, God allows us to go through trials to grow us; to improve us; to make us stronger; to make us more like Christ; to make us more holy.

So when you are going through trials, keep your eyes open for weaknesses in your faith.

And if you see weaknesses, then that is an indication that you need to get more **serious** about your spiritual life, or you need to **change your approach** to spiritual health and growth. That means that what you are currently doing to grow, and to maintain a healthy spiritual life is not cutting it; it's not sufficient; it's not working.

What do you need to do if trials reveal that you are spiritual weak or immature?
Get **SERIOUS** about your spiritual growth.

- **S** – Seek God through prayer.
- **E** – Exalt God in corporate worship.
- **R** – Read and study God's word.
- **I** – Invest your finances into God's kingdom.
- **O** – Obey God no matter the cost.
- **U** – Understand the goal of spiritual growth – imitate Christ, loving God and others more and more.
- **S** – Serve God and others in the church and in the community.

What if you've been doing those things, but you still find that trials are revealing a weak and immature faith?

Understand that spiritual growth takes time. It's a process.

And sometimes trials are simply God's way of telling us to keep growing; of telling us that we haven't yet arrived; that we need to stick to the process; that we must not take a break or relax from our spiritual training.

At the same time, realize that **there are usually three reasons that we fail the test of trials.**

First, we doubt that God is in control.

Second, we doubt that God will use the trial for our good.

And third, we settle for instant gratification rather than waiting to see the good that God has planned.

And so part of the key to growing is to learn and memorize some Scripture that affirms these three truths. Let me give you some examples.

First, **Isaiah 46:9-10 (CSB)** teaches that God is in total control. “Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like me. 10 I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will.”

Second, **Romans 8:28 (CSB)** promises that God will use our trials for our good. “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Third, **Galatians 6:9 (CSB)** assures us that it is worth it to wait on God. “Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up.”

4. Trials are intended to increase our eternal rewards.

Let’s read **verses 6-8** again. “6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials 7 so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

First of all, what is the revelation of Jesus Christ? That is referring to the second coming of Christ.

The Greek word is *apokalupsis* (Phonetic Pronunciation: ap-ok-al'-oop-sis). It means appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, or revelation.

This is one of the primary terms in the new testament used when referring to the second coming. The first word is “appearance” (*ephiphaneia*). The second word is “coming” (*Parousia*), and the third word is “revelation” or “revealing” (*apokalupsis*). And so Peter is referring to the second coming of Christ.

And Peter is saying that the goal of trials is to test and refine your faith so that you will receive praise, glory, and honor when Jesus comes back. What does that mean?

When Jesus comes back, He is going to come back as judge of every human being in history – the living and the dead. He is going to send unbelievers to hell, and He is going to hand out treasures and rewards to believers that they have stored up in this life by living lives of faith, and righteousness, and good deeds.

Matthew 16:27 (CSB) says, “For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each according to what he has done.”

1 Corinthians 4:5 (CSB) says, “So don’t judge anything prematurely, before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts. And then praise will come to each one from God.”

And so Peter is saying that the goal of trials is to grow you so that your reward at the final judgment will be as big as possible.

The goal of trials is that when Jesus comes back He will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant (Mt 25:21).”

CONCLUSION

A store owner placed a sign in his window announcing “Puppies for Sale.” Soon a small boy came with \$2.37 to buy a puppy. The store owner chuckled at the boy’s enthusiasm and agreed to let the boy take a look at the litter. When the mother and her puppies bounded out of the kennel, one of the puppies lagged behind. The store owner explained that the puppy had a malformed hip socket and would always limp. The boy excitedly announced that he wanted to buy the limping puppy. He gave the owner the \$2.37 and told him he would pay on the balance every month until he had paid for the dog. The owner tried to discourage the child warning him that the puppy would never run, jump, and play with him like the other puppies. To that, the boy pulled up his pant leg and revealed a left leg supported by a metal brace. He said, “I know how he feels. He’ll need someone who understands.”

If you are a Christian, God will let you go through trials.

But the purpose is not to destroy you.

The purpose is to develop you.

Just like that little boy’s trials made him more sympathetic and compassionate,

God wants to use your trials to develop you; to make you more compassionate; more loving; more useful; and yes, to make you happier.

Sometimes the reason we’re so depressed is that we’re so spoiled. And God has to send some trials into our lives to shake us out of our ungratefulness and lack of perspective.

God wants to use your trials to bless you.

So let me close with this. When you go through trials, ask three questions.

3 Questions to Ask in Your Trials

1. What happened to me? What is your trial?
2. Why am I here on earth? To glorify and enjoy God. To become like Christ, loving God and others more and more.
3. How can this trial advance that purpose?