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Reading 1 Peter 1:1-12

## WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

### 3. TRIUMPH IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS

Nearly two hundred years ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to his friend, and in it he said, “*The art of life is avoiding pain.*” When we first hear that statement, it appears to be true. None of us deliberately looks for pain as we go about our daily activities. When it comes for our annual dental check-up or our yearly visit to the doctor, we really wish we didn’t have to go. After all, the dentist might have to fill a cavity, or the doctor might order an operation or a diet. Generally speaking, all of us do our best to avoid pain and suffering. But when you look closer at Thomas Jefferson’s statement, you see that it fails to live up to the facts of history. Indeed our liberty in our land has been protected by pain and death. History itself shows that human progress can only be made when somebody suffers for that which is true and right. *But even apart from history our own personal experience teaches us the folly of that statement.*

Take the matter of child birth. We men know how difficult that is, as we try too feel for our wives. Sure, we have modern scientific methods to make it easier

for mothers, but there is still a certain amount of pain. The Lord Jesus said, “*A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*” ( Jn 16:21 ) Think too, of the pain and sorrow that the mother and father experience as they seek to raise that child. The old proverb says, “*When they are little children step on your feet, but when they are older they step on your heart.*” My .... often this is true. You see if everyone lived to avoid pain and suffering no-one would get married and raise a family, yet people do it all the time.

Suffering is a universal language. Tears are the same for Jews or Muslims or Christians, for white, black or brown, for children, or adults or the elderly. When life hurts and our dreams fade, we may express our anguish in different ways, but each one of us knows the sting of pain and heartache, disease and disaster, trials and sufferings. Joseph Parker, a great preacher of a bygone day once said to a group of aspiring young ministers, “*Preach to the suffering and you will never lack a congregation. There is a broken heart in every pew.*” Truly, suffering is the common thread in all our garments. Now to many people, indeed in a sense to all of us, suffering is a mystery. Even to the Christian there is a strong element of mystery in the whole question of suffering. Yet it also true to say that to the enlightened child of God suffering must not be looked upon so much as a mystery but as a ministry. For the believer comes to see that God, Who is over all has a gracious and wise purpose in permitting them to suffer.

Now remember Peter was writing to suffering saints. Indeed in ( 1:7 ) he says, “ *Ye are in heaviness or grief in all kinds of trials.* ” These Christians to whom Peter first addressed his letter were in the throes of a violent persecution that had robbed them of all their earthly comforts. Homeless, destitute, friendless, and thrust into the arena of bitter persecution in which their very life was in jeopardy. And let us be quite sure of this, life and loved-ones were as dear to them as they are to us. Parents among them loved their children and children respected their parents, so that the very thought of suffering inflicted on one’s loved one was like a dagger point in the quick of the heart. Oh, yes, they knew suffering alright. But Peter writes to encourage them and to show them that they can turn their **Trials into Triumph**. Notice here, there is,

### (1) A TESTING WE CAN EXPECT

You see the believer who expects his Christian life to be easy is in for a shock. The Lord Jesus warned his disciples, “ *in the world ye shall have tribulation.* ” ( Jn 16:33 ) Paul told his converts that “ *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* ” ( Acts 14:22 ) Because we are God’s “ *scattered people,* ” and not God’s “ *sheltered people,* ” we must experience trials. You see our faith is tested ( proved genuine ) by the trials of life. ( 1:7 ) My .... a faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. Here then (1) Our faith tested by the trials of life. Now Peter tells us several things about these trials. He says there is a,

### (a) **NECESSITY ABOUT THEM:**

The words, “ *if need be,* ” indicate that these trials are both necessary and purposeful. The Lord uses trials to humble believers ( Deut 8:3 ) to wean them away from worldly things and point them towards heaven ( Job 19:25-26 ) to teach them to value God’s blessing as opposed to life’s pain ( 4:13 ) to enable them to help Others ( 2 Cor 1:3 ) to chasten them for their sins ( 1 Cor 11:30 ) and to strengthen spiritual character. ( Rom 5:3 ) My .... there is nothing accidental or meaningless in our trials, rather they are under a benevolent overruling which seeks to develop a greater dependence, a richer faith, and a holier life. That word “ *trial,* ” in ( 1:7 ) conveys the picture of a precious metal being heated until it is liquid and its impurities rise to the top and are scraped off. Only pure metal is left. The point is that these stressful trials are the means by which our faith is tested and purged of dross.

God’s purpose in testing us is to purge us of impurity, to burn out the dross and to leave us cleansed and purified. My .... there is a dependable wisdom that chooses every thread in the pattern, so that we may confidently say,

*The dark threads are as needful  
In the weavers skilful hand  
As the threads of gold and silver  
In the pattern He has planned*

My .... do you recognise that your trials are necessary ?  
Do you realise that they are purposeful ? Is God

placing you in the melting pot, in the furnace of affliction to remove the dross, to strengthen your spiritual character ? (a)

**(b) SEVERITY ABOUT THEM:**

Trials are not easy. Peter did not suggest that we take a careless attitude toward trials because this would be deceitful. Trials produce what he called “*heaviness*.” “*Heaviness*,” is not just a case of having a heavy heart. It means we are distressed. The things that are happening around us weigh down upon us. Perhaps it seems that the Lord is so far away and maybe it seems that He does not seem to care. The word here means “*to experience grief and pain*.” The same word is used to describe the Lord Jesus experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane where it says, “*And he .... began to be sorrowful and very heavy*.” ( Matt 26:37 ) Moreover it is used to describe the sorrow of the saints at the death of their loved ones. ( 1 Thes 4:13 ) My .... can you imagine how these believers felt to whom Peter wrote ? Robbed of earthly comforts, unsure at this stage what the outcome would be. No doubt asking themselves the question, “*Will we have to die for our faith ?*”

My .... are you facing difficult experiences this .... ? Is there a severity about the trials that you’re encountering ? The Bible does not deny that our trials are severe, it does however assure that no trial will so severe that we cannot bear it. ( 1 Cor 10:13 ) (a) (b)

**(c) VARIETY ABOUT THEM:**

Peter uses the word “*manifold*,” which literally means “*many coloured*.” He uses the same word to describe God’s grace in ( Ch 4 ) he talks about “*the manifold grace of God*.” ( 4:10 ) Just as trials are diverse God’s sufficient grace for believers is equally diverse. My .... no matter what colour our day may be .... a blue Monday or a grey Tuesday .... God has grace sufficient to meet the need. You see our trials are varied, they are not alike. Some trials are job-related, some are financial, some are domestic still others may be physical. The point is, that we are faced with trials of all sorts and stripes. Now some trials are **Natural**: they come from sickness, accident, disappointment, or other painful circumstances. These trials are **Natural** because we live in fleshly bodies and in a sinful world. But some trials are **Supernatural**: they come upon us because we are believers ( 4:12 ) For when we line up with Christ, we line up against the present world’s system. My .... are your trials varied ? Are they many-coloured ? Well, so is the grace of God. And God’s grace is sufficient to meet your need. We don’t really know what Paul’s thorn in the flesh was.

Some scholars tell us it was spiritual temptation, persecution, physical appearance ( 2 Cor 10:10 ) epilepsy, migraine, malaria, eye trouble, demon oppression. I mean Paul could have been facing a variety of things ? But to this burdened believer the Risen Lord speaks personally revealing His tender concern. “*And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee*.” ( 2 Cor 12:9 ) No matter how you look at it.

God is adequate for every need you have. Divine grace in all its freshness, fullness, and freeness is yours. So there is a (a) (b) (c) but there is a,

**(d) BREVITY ABOUT THEM:**

For Peter reminds us that stressful trials are transitory. “*For a season ....*,” ( 1:6 ) You see when God permits His children to go through the furnace, He keeps his eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat, and He will not permit us to suffer one moment too long. Do you know what the eastern goldsmith does ? He keeps the metal in the furnace until he sees his face reflected in it. My .... are you faced with stressful trials right now ? Are you asking yourself, “ *is there no end to this ? Is there no light at the end of the tunnel ? Is there no way of easing the pain ?*” My .... do you know what one of the most common phrases in the Bible is ? “ *And it came to pass.*” The Lord will keep you in the furnace of affliction until you reflect the glory and beauty of Christ, but it will come to pass. Did you know that there is a reward for those who endure trial ? When we see the Lord Jesus we will bring “ *praise, honour, and glory,*” to Him if we have been faithful in the sufferings of this life. The tried and proven faith of the loyal servant will earn the “ *well done,*” of the Master.  
( Matt 25:21 James 1:12 ) So there is (1)

**(2) A TRIUMPH WE CAN EXPERIENCE**

The Christian philosophy of life is not “ *pie in the sky by and by.*” It carries with it a present dynamic that can

turn suffering into glory now, today. That’s what Peter says in ( 1:9 ) In other words we can experience today some of the future glory. We can receive a foretaste now of that which will be ours hereafter. We can turn trials into triumphs. How ?

**(a) BY EXPRESSING LOVE:**

Look at ( 1:8 ) if you will. My .... Peter loved the Lord Jesus. Do you recall that in the Garden of Gethsemane the Saviour is praying and Peter is sleeping ? He wakes up, an armed mob has come to get the Lord Jesus ! Peter leaps to his feet, whips out his sword and prepares to defend his Lord against the mob. That’s commitment. That’s love. That’s enthusiasm. Peter loves the Lord Jesus. A short later Peter flees back to Galilee, convinced he is good for nothing except catching fish. He meets the Risen Lord by the side of the lake, and the Risen Lord asks him the question, “ *Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ?*” ( 21:15 )  
“ *Peter do you love Me ?*” Tentatively he responds until, under the gentle, persistent probing of the Lord, he insists, “ ***Lord thou knowest all things thou knowest that I love thee.***” My .... do you love the Lord ? Now unlike Peter we have not seen the Lord Jesus. Our love is based on our spiritual relationship with Him and what the Word has taught us about Him.

The Holy Spirit has poured God’s love into our hearts ( Rom 5:5 ) and we return that love to Him especially in the trials of life. Have you ever found yourself in some trial and you hurt and the longer it continues the more embittered you become ? What can you do ?

Where can you turn ? My .... lift your heart to Christ in true love and worship. Why ? Because this will take the poison out of the experience and replace it with healing medicine. ( 1 Cor 13:7 ) You see, Satan wants to use life's trials to *bring out the worst in us*, God wants to use them to *bring out the best in us*. If we love ourselves more than we love God, then we not experience any of the glory now. But we can turn trials into triumphs by,

**(b) EXERCISING FAITH:**

Look at ( 1:8 ) again. Now we must live by faith and not by sight. An elderly lady fell and broke her leg while attending a summer Bible conference. She said to the pastor who visited her, “ *I know the Lord led me to the conference. But I don't see why this had to happen. And I don't see any good coming from it.* ” Wisely, the pastor replied, “ *Romans 8:28 doesn't say that we see all things working together for good. It says we know it.* ” My .... faith means surrendering to God and obeying His Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Love and faith go together, for when you love someone, you trust him. And faith and love together help to strengthen hope, for where you find faith and love, you will find confidence for the future. How can we grow in faith during times of suffering and trial ? The same way we grow in faith when things seem to be going well, by feeding on the Word of God.

( Rom 10:17 ) My .... our fellowship with Christ through His Word not only strengthens our faith, but it also deepens our love. So we can turn trials into

triumphs by (a) (b) and,

**(c) BY EXHIBITING JOY:**

For Peter says “ *ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* ” ( 1:8 ) You may not be able to rejoice over the circumstances, but you can rejoice in them, by centring your heart and mind on the Lord Jesus. ( 1:8 ) My .... each experience of trial helps us to learn something new and wonderful about our Saviour.

**Abraham** discovered new truths about the Lord on the mount where he offered his son Isaac. ( Gen 22:1 ) The **three Hebrew children** discovered his nearness when they went through the fiery furnace. ( Dan 3:25 ) **Paul** learned the sufficiency of His grace when he suffered with a thorn in the flesh. ( 2 Cor 12:9 ) My .... the secret of victory, of patience, of endurance in the time of trial is an ever present vision of the Lord Himself. ( Matt 14:29 ) Do you know what Charles Spurgeon used to say ? “ *Little faith will take your soul to heaven but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.* ”

You see it's not enough that we long for heaven during times of trial, for anyone can do that. What Peter was urging the believers to do was to express love: exercise faith: exhibit joy, so that they might experience some of the glory of heaven **now**. So there is (1) (2)

**(3) A TRUTH WE CAN EXPLORE**

It's the truth of salvation. Notice this truth was,

**(a) PROPHESED:**

Foretold by the prophets of old. You see the Old Testament prophets wrote about this salvation and studied closely what God revealed to them. ( Is 53:5 Lk 24:27 ) They saw the sufferings of the Messiah, and also the glory that would follow, but they could not fully understand when and how their predictions would take place. ( 1:11 ) *They could not fully understand the connection between the two.* When the Saviour came to earth, the Jewish teachers were awaiting a conquering Messiah who would defeat Israel's enemies and establish the glorious kingdom promised to David. Even Christ's own disciples were not clear about the need for His death on the cross. ( Matt 16:13-28 ) They were still inquiring about the Jewish kingdom even after His resurrection. ( Acts 1:6 ) My .... if the disciples were not clear about God's program, certainly the Old Testament prophets could be excused.

These prophets were ministering for a future generation.

Between the suffering of Messiah and His return in glory comes what we call "***the church age,***" a hidden mystery in the Old Testament period. ( Eph 3:1-13 ) You see Old Testament believers looked ahead by faith and saw, as it were, two mountain peaks. Mount Calvary, where Messiah suffered and died ( Is 53:5 ) and Mount Olivet where He would return in glory. ( Zech 14:4 ) But they could not see the "***valley,***" in between, "***the church age.***" My .... if these Old Testament prophets searched diligently into the fields of revelation, is this not a rebuke to us ? Why ? Well, they had so little to go on, but they searched diligently.

We have so much to go on, a complete Word from God, but are we searching diligently ? Like the Bereans do we take time with the Word of God ? Do you search the Scriptures daily ? ( Acts 17:11 ) Yes, this truth was (a)

**(b) PROCLAIMED:**

Do you see how Peter puts it ? "*reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.*" ( 1:12 ) This salvation was not only conceived in the mind of God, conveyed to the prophets, but it was cried aloud by the apostles, ( Acts 2:38 ) who were empowered by the Holy Spirit. My .... do you see the **Substance** of apostolic preaching ? The sufferings of Christ, the cross of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the glory of Christ. It was Christ-centred preaching. Do you see here the **Manner** of Apostolic preaching ? In the words of the apostle Paul "*Not with enticing words of mans wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*" ( 1 Cor 2:4 ) My .... this truth of salvation was proclaimed. My .... are you proclaiming it ? Are you gossiping it ? Are you proclaiming it with power ? This truth of salvation was (a) (b) and it is,

**(c) PROFOUND:**

So much so that the angels desire to look into it. The word "***desire,***" is a strong one, referring to a passionate desire. "*To look into,*" ( parakupto ) is used in the gospels of Peter, John, and Mary, stooping down and looking into the empty tomb. ( Jn 20:5, 11 ) The

expression is beautiful, the angels are bending down with earnest desire, fixing their intense gaze on the wonders of God's salvation. ( Eph 3:10 ) The Bible indicates some of the things angels do. They oppose demons ( Dan 10:13 ) they carry messages from God, ( Matt 2:13 ) they perform other divine service. ( Ps 91:11-12 Heb 1:14 ) Paul tells us in ( Eph 3:10 ) that God is using the church here and now as an object lesson for angelic beings good and evil to teach them something of his manifold wisdom.. We never think of the angels when we come to worship do we ? But they are watching us, looking at our appearance and dress. ( 1 Cor 4:9 1 Tim 5:21 ) ***When a Christian woman or girl comes into a gathering for worship with her head covered she becomes to the angels an object lesson of divine submission.*** What a rebuke she is to the wicked angels for remember there was a time when within the angelic ranks one of the angels rose up in rebellion against the headship of God. Lucifer was his name and one third of the angelic host rebelled with him. ( Rev 12:4 ) There was rebellion against the authority of God, and now what God is doing is this, He's showing the redeemed people to the angels. God is saying, ***" I will show you in another company that I have redeemed, and who love me headship in action."***

My .... *what a wonder to the angels as they peer into the fellowship of God's people to see a man with his head uncovered and a woman with her head covered accepting God's order of things.* And here they are again fixing their intense gaze on the wonders of God's salvation. My .... if the angels find ever fresh fields of interest in the sufferings of Christ and the glory that

should follow, should not we also ? Familiarity, they tell me, breeds contempt. ***" Tell me the old, old story, and bore me out of my skull one more time,"*** is the attitude of many today. But pondering the person of Christ should lead to a sense of wonder and worship. My .... do you ever think of the horror of the sinless One being made sin ? Do you ever ponder the cry of desolation,

***" My God, My God why .... Me ?"***

Do you ever try to imagine the sufferings of Christ when He looked at His disciples as they forsook and fled ? And Peter, the one who promised to be there, running away, crying from a little girl ?

Oh, its easy to sing,

**When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride**

But if we can survey the wondrous cross and lose the wonder, we have got problems. My .... let us explore the Saviour's Sufferings with new interest and let us adore the Saviour's Person with new intensity, for ***" Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."*** ( Rev 5:12 )