

1 Peter 1:6-9

“The What, Why and How of Christian Trial and Suffering”

Glenvista Baptist Church

Sunday 12 January 2020

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

Introduction.

- a) It is my first opportunity to preach in this new year and I thought it good just as a once off to focus on a topic which I trust will be used of God to encourage the hearts of the saints afresh. In the last 6-8 months or so, I have had the peculiar privilege of walking the road with a number of our people who have been led by God through deep waters and fiery trials. The faith of many at Glenvista has been tested by our loving God, and as is often the case, the longer the trial, the wearier the saints tend to become. So friend, if you find yourself under the hand of God, being sovereignly subjected to trial, then this message is just for you, and I pray God will use this message to help you afresh to lift up your eyes to the hills knowing that our help comes from Him who has made heaven and earth.
- b) I thought it good to turn to this passage in **1 Peter** in which we see Peter clearly instructing the saints in Asia Minor as to how they ought to respond as believers to times of difficulty. These saints no doubt were experiencing suffering and trial and hardship as a result of their faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ.
- c) So often, it seems that so many believers face excruciating trials that are humanly incomprehensible. What we will learn from this text is that there is a God-ordained means and purpose behind all kinds of Christian suffering and trial, and that the purposes God has for His people, so often include great trials and temptations.
- d) **That was the occasion of this letter Peter wrote. Its purpose was to encourage suffering believers to keep their eyes on the Lord during times of great suffering and to put Christian suffering within its proper perspective. Peter writes giving credit to God for allowing all forms of suffering to come upon His people; and writes reminding the people of God that God is able to give increased grace to those who are suffering.**
- e) The persecution that came their way was simply because of the profession these believers made for the cause of Christ and the honor of the Lord's Name. These believers were a minority group at the particular time, and anything in minority automatically was treated with suspicion and contempt by the authorities of the day. These believers were seen as troublemakers, as heretics and were treated extremely harshly for their faith.

- f) You may be facing some form of calamity/challenge/trial right now. You may experience persecution and ridicule from friends and family who do not serve the Risen Christ? You may be having difficulties at work, simply because you are a Christian, or you may be facing unexpected challenges or even health problems. Perhaps you have emotional pain, heartache or sorrow. Perhaps an unspoken need or an unmet desire that has brought devastation. Whatever the challenge, I pray that you may see your struggles today in light of the glory and hope that the Gospel offers us in this passage.
- g) **This passage teaches:** (1) the purpose for Christian Suffering; (2) the hope believers have in Christian Suffering, and (3) the outcome that Christian Suffering has. We will look at these three things more closely as we seek to expound the passage.

Point 1 – “The Purpose behind Christian Suffering” (vs.6 – 7a)

- 1 Peter 1:6-7a (ESV) “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith...”
- a) **V6** This section of thought is introduced by the words “in this you rejoice”. **How can anyone rejoice in their suffering?** What does the apostle Peter mean when using these word? Are we called to enjoy our trials and the sufferings that often come along?
- b) At a careful study it will evidently be noticed that Peter was not encouraging his disciples here to “enjoy” their suffering or to become like sadists who enjoy punishing and afflicting their bodies. **No, the focus of rejoicing is not their suffering, but the preceding thoughts which spoke of the rich inheritance believers obtain by the free mercy of God dispensed to undeserving sinners at the expense of Christ on the Cross, coming to believers secured by the Divine Power of God. It is “in this” that we rejoice.** This great gift of salvation and rich inheritance that cannot spoil, fade or perish.
- c) No person enjoys suffering or enjoys being inflicted by pain. For the believer though it is the riches of our redemption that causes us to rejoice in Christ our Maker, and Redeemer. **Even in the most severe trials the blessings of God’s grace and the resultant peace we have with our Lord should be the grounds for our rejoicing.** This new life we have in Christ, plus the blessed inheritance kept in heaven for us by God are great and precious realities for every believer. So precious, that even in the midst of severe trial, these realities are what keep us joyful and triumphant. We know that this earth is not our home and that Christ has gone ahead to prepare a place for us where there will be no more death or crying or tear or even pain when the old order of things has passed away (Revelation 21:4 – “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”). That is our Christian anchor when the seas of life become unsteady and rough.
- d) **Christians therefore do not rejoice in the pain suffering brings about, but rather we rejoice in the blessings that are procured for us by the blessedness of our salvation. Our rejoicing, even under the most difficult, traumatizing and painful circumstances, is in the faithfulness of our God who leads and guides us into all the promises that come our way as a result of the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ Jesus.**
- e) **V7** In order though to have peace during times of great suffering, believers do need to understand the purpose behind any form of suffering. **It is only a proper theology of suffering that will cause us to respond properly and biblically in times of great distress and**

pain. The purpose for our suffering is very clearly introduced here by the apostle Peter in v7 with the words *“so that”*. (*You have gone through various trials (v6), so that...*)

- f) Peter makes it evidently clear here that: **God ordains Suffering for the purpose of proving the genuineness of our faith.** Suffering in other words is the crucible God uses in the life of any believer, as a means of purification, character building, and making us holy and acceptable before God the Father. Suffering is the “fire” that cleanses us from all impurities so that our lives may reflect the Glory of our Awesome God.
- g) William Harrell in his commentary says: *“The sufferings of the faithful are divinely ordained tests, designed not to destroy them, but to sanctify them fully and triumphantly.”*
- h) See how this concept taught here by Peter is adequately confirmed in both the Old and New Testaments:
 - See how James speaks of the cleansing nature that our suffering has. **James 1:2-4** *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*
 - Peter makes it clear that Suffering is to be expected for all believers. **1 Peter 4:12** *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”*
 - Job confirms the purifying nature of our Suffering. **Job 23:10** *“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”*
 - The Psalmist knew that Suffering is the means by which God tries His people. **Psalm 66:10** *“For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.”*
 - The Wisest man who lived knew that God tests our hearts. **Proverbs 17:3** *“The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts.”*
 - Isaiah the prophet spoke of affliction being the means of our trials. **Isaiah 48:10** *“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.”*
 - See how Jesus endorsed Suffering. **Matthew 5:12** *“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*
 - Jesus forewarned His disciples that they would have trouble. **John 16:33** *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*
- i) These verses therefore should leave no doubt in our minds, that suffering is firstly divinely ordained by God for our good and for our benefit, and secondly that God uses suffering as the means of showing forth the genuineness of our faith. **Suffering is therefore NEVER the intents of a cruel mean God inflicting pain for the purpose of hurting and damaging His people. On the contrary, it is the endeavor of a loving faithful God, divinely orchestrating events, which may be painful at times, to bring all of His children into conformity with His will for their lives.** *“Our Heavenly Father employs the furnace of affliction not to ruin, but to refine the faith of His people.”* (Harrell p12)

Point 2 – “The Hope in Christian Suffering” (vs.8)

- 1 Peter 1:8 (ESV) *“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...”*
- a) **If suffering is then divinely designed by God to show the genuineness of our faith, what would then give believers the ability to endure the harshest manners of suffering? Peter**

makes clear that the believer's knowledge of God is that which keeps the believer standing firm when his faith is under fire. The knowledge of an Almighty, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Wise and All-Gracious God is what we need to keep us firm.

- b) **V8** In verse 8 Peter speaks of a hope that does not see; yet a hope that knows. It must be kept in mind that Peter here speaks as a man who had the wonderful privilege of physically seeing the Lord Jesus Christ. He was with Christ, he touched Christ, and he knew without any doubts that Christ was who He said He was. Yet, Peter writes here to those who have never had such a privilege and by implication you and me as well. **It is the fact that we have not seen, yet know, which gives believers courage and tenacity as we trust in a faithful God by keeping the eyes of faith fixedly gazed upon His Majesty.**
- c) Even Peter, who had seen Christ, recognized the blessed nature of a faith that had not yet seen. It immediately reminds me of the account where Jesus speaks to Thomas:
- John 20:24-29 "Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**" (Emphasis mine)
- d) **V8** Peter in other words, here emphasizes that even though those who read his letters have not seen Christ, they can now rejoice because they see Him with the eyes of faith.
- e) **This faith, then, which cannot see physically, but knows by faith the reality of our Christian hope, leads all believers, even in the midst of great trial, to be filled with an "inexpressible joy which is filled with glory".**
- f) As our faith grows pure and strong through its exercise in trials, we rejoice more and more. Our faith then enables us to stand as more than conquerors through all that could possibly come our way (cf. Rom 8:31-39). It is then as the genuineness of our faith is proven, which in turn leads to the praise and glory of God, that believers under trial are filled with a joy that cannot be expressed in words. **For a believer the mere knowledge that His God's Name will be lifted high if he suffers well, gives him enough reason to stand firm under trial.**
- g) **V8** "Though you have not seen him, you love him". I also want you to see here that this passage teaches that increased trial always leads to increased love for the Master. When the Lord purifies our faith and brings us out victoriously on the other side; the believer can only stand in awe of the majesty and splendor of a Holy and Awesome God. God's Grace in times of severe trial reminds us of God's Great Love for us and causes us to love Him More.
- h) I have a wonderful Hymn on my Wall here in my study at the Church that was given to us at the time of Liezel's Cancer Journey and it has meant a great deal to us as a family. I trust as I read it that it will mean a great deal to you as well; if you are currently undergoing some form of Christian Suffering; or even in preparation of Christian Suffering which might still come.
- i) It was written by Annie Johnson Flint:

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater
He sendeth more strength when your labours increase

To added affliction He addeth His mercy
To multiplied trials His multiplied grace

His love has no limit
His grace has no measure
His power has no boundary known unto men
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth and giveth again

When we have exhausted our stores of endurance
When our strength is failed ere the day is half done
When we've reached the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving has only begun

His love has no limit
His grace has no measure
His power has no boundary known unto men
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth and giveth again

- j) Dear Friend, no matter how tough it may be now; stand firm; it is for your benefit **and** will lead to the praise of God's Name. May your love for the Savior increase as you experience His faithful hands carrying you during time of great trial.

Point 3 – “The Outcome of Christian Suffering” (vs.7b&9)

- 1 Peter 1:7b&9 (ESV) “... (7b) 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... (9) obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”
- a) If suffering is divinely ordained by God to prove the genuineness of our faith, we need to be asking what the outcome of all this is.
- b) **Peter here likens the trying of our faith to the process, which is used to refine gold. Gold is a precious and valuable metal; yet, to obtain the purest form of gold it must be refined to a very high standard. A fiery trial is necessary in order for impurities to be removed from the lump of gold. It is only when the gold is subject to the intense heat of the fiery furnace that every trace of impurity is burned up. If it is pure gold that is sought, then this smelting process must be completed in order to obtain the finest results.**
- c) **V7b** Peter then speaks to the believers about their faith, by telling them that **their faith is like the gold that goes through the smelting process.** Yet he makes it clear, that their faith is even more precious than purified gold. One day, when Christ comes again, and this earth is destroyed, even a precious metal such as gold will perish. But the faith of God's people will endure right up until the culmination of all events, as it is kept by God Himself.
- d) **Just as fire purifies gold:** so do trials cleanse our faith from all forms of human filth and effort. Trials leave us with a trust in God that is centered on Him alone.
- e) **In this passage Peter then makes it clear that the outcome of faith under trial has a twofold nature to it:**

- **Firstly Christian suffering always leads to the Glory of God.** Peter says that the tested genuineness of our faith “**may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**”. In other words, God is glorified through our sanctified sufferings. When a believer suffers and the sufferings become increasingly intense, there is nothing that a mere human can do other than call on the Name of His God, finding God to be a faithful friend in our hour of need. When this same believer then comes out victoriously on the other side; the object of his worship is always God, in acknowledgement of God's abiding grace that carried him through the hour of need. God is most glorified when believers suffer well. It will be at the revelation of Jesus Christ that refined faith will be the cause for praise, glory and honor. The attributes of our God will be sung, when the faith of believers come out victoriously on the other side. The purpose of earthly trials is to sift out what is genuine in our faith. This in turn will bring praise, glory and honor, both to Jesus and to the person who has suffered on the day when Jesus is revealed.
 - **Secondly, Christian suffering always leads to our great good.** This concept is clearly seen in some of the following verses:
 - 1 Thessalonians 3:3 “...that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.”
 - James 1:2-4 “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”
 - Rom 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.”
- f) The good our trials bring us is always a greater dependency on Christ for strength and hope. We cast ourselves more fully upon Him and through these fiery trials He quickens His love for us in our hearts. And so we experience sweeter and deeper fellowship and intimacy with Christ as we share in the fellowship of His sufferings. **Philippians 3:10 “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...”**
- g) **V9** The final outcome then of our tried and tested faith is the salvation of our souls. By this Peter is not referring to our first time encounter with Christ, but rather to the full consummation of all things, our final salvation as we will be taken up to be with Christ forever in a face to face situation. This is what we live and long for. Our current sufferings, no matter how dreadful and awful they might be, are not worth comparing with the great glory that will be revealed to those of us who are loved by the Lord. The end of all things are near, and believers are called to hold fast to the profession of their faith, as we long with great intensity for the day in which all suffering will come to an end, and we will hear those words of commendation from our Savior: **“Well done, good and faithful servant.”**
- h) **And so, we ultimately recognize that there is a purpose in our suffering; Christ is making us more like Himself and that will end in the highest praise for His Name. We recognize also that the hope of knowing Christ, gives us the grace and courage to endure through our suffering. And we also recognize that all of this is for our own good and ultimately for our God's glory.**
- i) And so we go on, regardless. We fight the good fight and we run the race with perseverance.
- j) We end off by remembering the words of the apostle Paul and we take great courage from it: **2 Corinthians 4:7-12 “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;**

persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you."

- k) We also consider the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk: "¹⁷ Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)
- l) And we finally take comfort by reading how the apostle Paul summarized this so well in his letter to the Church at Rome: "¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)
- m) Dear friends, keep your eyes on Jesus, the Victorious Messiah, who will lead His people through trial that we may come out as more than conquerors through Christ who enables us for the sake of His glory and praise.

Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria

Glenvista Baptist Church – 12 January 2020