

Words of Comfort for Tried Ones

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of suffering and trial in the Christian life, and how it can lead to a deeper faith, hope, and love.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:6

Topics: "Trials and Suffering", "Hope and Comfort"

Description

A.B. Simpson delivers a powerful message of hope and comfort for those enduring trials, emphasizing that these challenges are not without purpose and can lead to spiritual growth and transformation. He reflects on Peter's journey from denial to becoming a source of encouragement for others, illustrating how trials refine faith and prepare believers for greater ministry. Simpson reassures the congregation that their suffering is temporary and precious, ultimately leading to praise and glory at Christ's return. He encourages them to view their trials as opportunities to witness for Christ and to remember that they are not alone in their struggles, as others share in similar afflictions. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's grace and the promise of eternal glory after enduring hardships.

Transcript

"Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6,7.)

Peter was to be the special target of Satan's assaults just because Christ had chosen him for so high a ministry. But even his very trials were his best preparation for that ministry, and the Master here intimates that when through the discipline of temptation he shall have himself become transformed, it will be his special calling to comfort and confirm his tried and tempted brethren.

How marvelously has he been transformed since that dark night of the betrayal! One has only to read his tender and lovely messages in his two epistles to see how truly he had taken up his Master's cross, and how deeply he had learned the lesson of his humiliating fall. One has only to read further his messages of consolation to the tried and tempted to see how faithfully he has fulfilled his commission, "Strengthen your brethren." The First Epistle of Peter is the best commentary on this text, and we can find no more comforting and helpful message for those who are passing through fiery trials than these letters of hope and comfort.

Peter is indeed the apostle of hope, as Paul is the apostle of faith, and John the messenger of love. The keynote of his first epistle is this word, trial, which reappears in every chapter and forms the pivot of almost all his messages of comfort and encouragement. We have but to read the following passages to find that this one thought is sustained through the entire epistle: "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1: 6, 7.) "For this is worthy of thanks, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2: 19-21.) "But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas, they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing." (2 Peter 3: 14-17.) "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4: 12-16.) "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter 5: 9, 10.)

Let us gather out of these passages Peter's special messages of consolation to the tried and troubled.

1. He begins by giving them the vision of hope and heaven before he says a single word about trial. He tells them of the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and reserved in heaven for them, before he draws the dark picture of persecution and suffering. When the sea captain sees the sailor boy growing white as he climbs the mast, he always shouts to him, "Look up!" and his nerves grow cool and his fears are assuaged. So the Lord on that dark night, when He was bidding His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled, told them of the Father's house of many mansions and the place prepared. Let us begin every trial with the thought of heaven and the hope of His coming and the joy set before us, and we, too, shall be enabled to endure the cross, despising the shame, and often sing:

"When I can read my title clear

To mansions in the skies,

I'll bid farewell to every fear,

And wipe my weeping eyes.

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,

And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all."

2. It is only for "a season." Compared with that long and happy eternity, the longest trial is short indeed. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Remember, suffering child of God, it will be over soon, and faith and hope can hear the whisper in an undertone, "It is but a little while."

3. There is a "need be" for every trial. It does not come by chance. There is a divine purpose in it all. It is necessary for your spiritual education, and some day you will thank God that He loved you well enough to let you learn to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

"You are in heaviness," he says, "through manifold temptations," and there is a "need be" even for this. How true it is that trouble never comes alone! When the adversary gets your body under, he loves to strike your soul and inject the fiery darts of discouragement and doubt. And you must not wonder if sometimes the trial strikes into the very depths of your being, and you even lose your joy and spring, and fall into heaviness of spirit. This is the hardest of all temptations. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" We are so apt to conclude at such a time that the Holy Spirit has left us or we should not be so depressed. Beloved, this is not so. There was a time when the Master "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." There was a time when Paul had to say, "We had no rest in our spirit; without were fightings, within were fears." Do not wonder, therefore, if your heart may sink sometimes in deep and long depression. There may be a "need be" even for this. Perhaps the Lord is crucifying you to your natural exuberance of spirit and teaching you to take your joy by faith from the Holy Ghost, and so find an everlasting joy which the world can neither give nor take away.

4. Your trial is "more precious than gold which perishes, though it be tried with fire." That is to say, the trial, not the faith, is precious. We really possess nothing but that which has become part of our being. Outward conditions and circumstances will all pass away, but the experience that God burns into us will be part of our life forevermore. Therefore trial is precious because it makes Christ real to us and fixes the spiritual character which the Holy Ghost imparts. Remember, suffering one, that your trial is very precious to Him. He is watching it with anxious and ceaseless solicitude. He will not suffer it to go too far or last too long, but the very moment that the end has been accomplished, He will withdraw the vessel from the flames and give you rest from your sorrow.

5. It will redound to "praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Praise," for we shall thank Him for His faithful love in not excusing us from the hardest and highest classes in the school of experience. "Honor," for it will entitle us to rank in the school among the veterans and to wear our battle scars as marks of highest honor amid the overcomers yonder. And "glory," for in no other way can we earn the rewards of heaven and the glory which is superadded to the grace except by sacrifice and suffering. Salvation is a gift of grace, all grace, and we have nothing to pay or do to win it. But glory is gained by giving up our will, by taking up the cross, by letting go our rights, by standing in the hard place now, as we share the sufferings of Christ, and "when his glory shall be revealed we shall be glad also with exceeding joy."

6. "This is worthy of thanks, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully." Literally this means God will say, "I thank you." This passage is addressed especially to the slaves at Rome, not ordinary servants, but actually bondslaves, the property of their masters, and compelled to do and endure the most trying things at their will. The apostle comforts them in their trial by telling them that some day God Himself will stoop from the throne to thank them before the universe for their patient and faithful sufferings for His sake. What a proud day that was for Admiral Dewey when the nation thanked him for his great exploit! What a supreme honor it was when Lord Roberts knelt at the feet of his queen to receive her acknowledgments for his victorious campaign! But, oh, what a day it will be when some lowly servant maid shall be taken from the kitchen and seated by the side of the King of glory, while He shall tell the world how she suffered for His sake, and perhaps accomplished a higher ministry in her lowly place than the tongue of eloquence or the gifts of fortune of those who had much higher opportunities.

7. Be comforted by the consciousness that you are suffering innocently. "If, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." And yet some people are always going about telling how wrongfully they have been accused, how cruelly they have been misrepresented, how unjustly they have suffered. One would think that they were ashamed of that which the apostle considers the highest glory. The fact that you are innocent ought to take all the sting out of your trial and make you rejoice that you are counted worthy to be silent in the hour of misrepresentation, to let God vindicate you, and to "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

8. Remember that it is your business to suffer for Christ "for even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps." What would you think of a soldier complaining because he had been fired at? It is a soldier's business to be fired at. And so it is your calling to suffer for Jesus' sake. If you do not like it you should retire from the business of being a Christian. But if you intend to be true to your calling, you must not shrink from trial for Jesus' sake, nor be as eager to get out of the trial as to glorify Him in it. The apostles recognized their persecutions and summonses before courts and magistrates as just so many pulpits to preach the Gospel and they were not half as anxious to escape from their enemies as to have every situation turn to them for a testimony.

Your humble station, your menial task may afford the very opportunity necessary for some special service which another could not do. An ancient legend tells us that one day a lad in Galilee was about to go out with his morning basket of buns and fish to sell for their scanty living. "Mother," he cried, "is the bread all ready?" And the mother answered impatiently, "Oh, I am so tired of this everlasting drudgery. Will it never end?" But at last the little basket was filled, and the lad had sold all but five of the loaves and two of the fishes, and just then, boylike, he began to follow the crowd that was streaming over the hills. Before he realized how far he had gone, he was out in the wilderness, close up to the great Teacher and one of His disciples whom he had come to know, good Andrew, whom he had doubtless met on his village rounds. They were looking for bread for that great multitude of perhaps twenty thousand people, counting the women and children, and they had nothing but this lad's little basket. But as he told his wondering mother how the Prophet had taken his loaves and fishes and blessed them, and given them out to the multitude in pieces until every one had eaten enough, and there were still left twelve baskets, she listened with strange interest, and her tears fell fast, and she said, "Did He really take my loaves and use them? Then never again will I be weary or discouraged of baking bread, so long as I know that I am making it for Him." Some day, dear one, you shall find that it was indeed for Him, and that instead of being a servant for some earthly and stingy taskmaster, you were ministering to Jesus and winning a crown of glory that shall never fade away.

9. Trial affords us a fine opportunity to witness for Christ by our example. Nothing speaks for Him so emphatically as a patient, gentle spirit bearing in silent meekness the abuse and wrong which others may heap upon us, and often we shall find that when we are right with people God makes them right with us.

A good woman in Stockholm had started a nursery for friendless and helpless children, but one of the little inmates was a constant trial to her. His body was diseased, his temper was intolerable. He seemed to have no gratitude or appreciation for any kindness shown him, but was always cross and discontented, while in addition his face was covered with sores, his form distorted and repulsive, and everything about him utterly forbidding. At last one day she had been telling the Lord that her burden was too hard to bear. Just then came to her a vision of her Lord, and she seemed to see Him bending over her with a look of great love and saying to her, "My dear child, I have loved and borne with you for more than half a century. Cannot you for My sake love and bear with this wretched child?" Her soul was thrilled with such a sense of His love that the very joy awoke her, and there before her eyes was the miserable child. But her heart was so filled with the Savior's love that she seemed to love everything else for His sake, and bending down she gently kissed the child. All at once her own spirit seemed to have passed into him, and the little one looked up with a smile that she had never seen before and threw his arms around her neck and began to caress her. From that time the disposition of the child was changed. The Savior's love had touched her heart and she had just passed it on to the little heart to whom she was in the place of God, and she had her reward in the beautiful transformation she saw from that time in her little charge. From that day forward the little one was completely changed, and became gentle, affectionate and even beautiful, and that which had been to her an insupportable burden became an unceasing joy. So our gentleness and sweetness will speak to others and awaken in them the response which our words can never call forth; while on the other hand our petulance and temper will often mar in a single moment the efforts of our lips and lives for many years to bring some soul to Christ.

"So let our lips and lives express

The holy Gospel we profess."

10. It will comfort and sustain us in trial to remember that we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ. Remember when any cross confronts you that it is His cross, that it is not yours, but His, and that it is just part of the load that He has left behind for you to bear for Him. The question is, Will you or He carry it? The apostle speaks of "filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body, the Church." The Lord Jesus has left behind something for us to bear, something of His sufferings. Will we take it up and carry it for Him, or shall we leave Him to bear the burden alone? Has He not borne enough already, and shall we not consider it a privilege and a joy to be partakers with Him of the burden that some day is to bring so great a blessing and reward? Doubtless you have heard the ancient legend which has been immortalized in the Polish romance, *Qua Vadis*. It tells us that when the fearful persecution of Nero arose against the Christians at Rome, to which this epistle undoubtedly refers when it speaks of the fiery trial, or more literally, "The trial of burning which is to try you," when Christians were soaked in oil, set on fire, and tied to stakes in the Roman squares to light the streets by night -- that Peter himself, with a little band of fugitive Christians, was leaving Rome late one night, when he met his Master with a sorrowful face walking back to the city and about to enter the gate through which he had just escaped. "Where do You go?" he asked. And the Lord answered, "I am going to Rome to be crucified again because My servant Peter has fled from the cross." And Peter fell at his Master's feet and cried, "No, Lord, I will go back again, and gladly die for You." And so with head downward he let them nail him to the cross, counting it too high a privilege even to suffer with as much honor as his dying Lord.

Beloved, who shall bear the cross that meets you in your life? Your Lord or you? God help you to rejoice in your sufferings for Him and fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body, the Church.

11. "The spirit of glory and of God will rest upon you" in the hour of trial. When Israel of old came through the depths of the sea then the cloud moved and came through the camp, baptizing them in its folds and making them to realize that God comes nearest to the heart, and often fills it with wonder and praise, when the "peace of God which passes all understanding guards our heart and mind." We look back upon such seasons as the sunlit memories of life and often say of them, "You have known my soul in adversities." Let us claim the promise and "glory in tribulation also," and when God puts us most severely to the test let us put Him most fully to the test also, and we shall find that "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ."

12. Trial borne for Christ will bring us a great reward, for "if we are partakers of Christ's sufferings; . . . when his glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy." Man loves to keep the memorials of heroic deeds, but, oh, how much more will God treasure up on high the monuments of His people's victories! And some day we shall find our tears transformed to jewels in the crown that we shall lay at Jesus' feet.

In one of the anniversary meetings of the British societies, a wealthy and distinguished layman told this incident in the life of his mother and father, both widely known throughout the Christian world for their splendid gifts to the cause of Christ. He said that when his father came to London, he was a poor lad with his fortune yet to be made. But in passing a certain house one morning, he was attracted by a girl who was washing the stone steps, and with a very bright, happy face, was singing snatches of religious hymns. From morning to morning the lad continued to come that way and often saw the fair vision of this happy face. One day he made bold to ask her to direct him to some Christian church as he was a stranger in the city. Naturally she directed him to her own, and they gradually got better acquainted until that friendship ripened into love and marriage. But he never forgot the vision of his first acquaintance with her and the beautiful spectacle of that humble girl so happy in her life of toil. When his great fortune was made and the time came to build a splendid mansion, he bought the house where she used to work as a servant, and took the stone steps bodily from its front and put them in his new mansion, that he might have a permanent memorial of the beautiful young life that had won him by its patient dignity and sweetness. And so we shall doubtless find yonder in our heavenly home, such memorials of sacrifice and service; perhaps some old broom or washtub preserved, as the relics of the saints are kept today on earth, but bearing some blessed memorial of the Master's grace and the disciple's victory.

13. Remember in your darkest hour of trial that you are not alone, for He tells you that "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Finally, the issue of your trials. "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." So, beloved, may we let Him establish, strengthen, and settle us, and thus bring us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, to whom be glory both now and forever, Amen.

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