

Victory in Adversity

by Doc Greenway

The Christian's victory in adversity is possible through the power of faith, patience, and the presence of God.

Duration: 1:01:45

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 1 Peter 4:12, 1 Peter 4:14

Topics: "Adversity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the victory that Christians can experience in the midst of adversity. He begins by referencing the fourth chapter of the First Epistle of Peter, emphasizing the Christian's victory in spite of difficulties. The preacher then shares a story about Dan Crawford and his experience crossing a flooded stream in Africa. Through prayer, God miraculously made a way for them to cross, illustrating the certainty of God's provision in times of adversity. The preacher concludes by highlighting the purpose of adversity in testing and purifying believers, comparing it to the process of casting a bell.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles with you, would you turn with me, please, to the fourth chapter of the first epistle of Peter, and we commence reading at verse 12. The first epistle of Peter, the fourth chapter, the twelfth verse. 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 ye are partakers of Christ's suffering, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

May the Lord bless these verses to us as we consider them tonight, and may the Holy Spirit take the things of Christ which they contain and show them unto us. To his name be the praise and all the glory. When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions.

So speaks the King in Hamlet of the rising tide of troubles which threaten to engulf Ophelia, and all this is in perfect harmony with the experience of men, and of Christians in particular. In the midst of afflictions there is always the danger of succumbing to self-pity, to be trapped into a miserable mood of complaining and whimpering and groaning. It is then that faith ebbs and doubt flows, love recedes and rebellion arises,

vision is distorted and the chariot wheels seem to drag.

The triple evils of despondency, disappointment and defeatism hold empire or the soul in times of adversity. But that is no way for a Christian to live. Listen to Paul when he considers his circumstances, his physical infirmity, his prison house experiences, the loneliness, the frustration.

But rejoice, he shouts, and again I say, rejoice. That is the way in which the Christian is to face trouble according to what Peter declares here. For he speaks in these verses about the Christian's victory in adversity.

Is this possible, do you think? Is it indeed possible for a Christian to live in this way? Well, I am positive that the Holy Spirit is able to give grace in the hardest place, that the Spirit of God in all His working and ministry is desirous of bringing each one of us to that happy position where we are able to rejoice and enjoy perfect victory in spite of all adversity. Quiet thou cast down, O my soul, and quiet thou disquiet it within me, asks the psalmist. Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

After forty years of brilliant success, the great composer Handel was down and out. His health was broken. His main financial supporter, Queen Caroline, was dead.

He was deep in debt and hungry. He felt a hundred years old and hopelessly tired. There was no fire of inspiration left in him.

As he walked by a London church one day, he groaned aloud, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, he asked. Hopelessly he returned to his shabby lodgings. There on his desk he found a bulky package.

He broke the seal, drew out the contents, shivered the words for a sacred oratorio. The author was asking Handel to write the music for it. Handel was indignant.

He was in no mood for religious meditation. Why had not the author written an opera instead? But as he began to turn the pages, a passage caught his eye. He was despised and rejected of men.

He looked for someone to have pity. He trusted in God. God did not leave his soul in hell.

He will give you rest, wonderful counsellor. I know that my Redeemer liveth. Rejoice! Hallelujah! Handel could feel the old fiery kindling.

In his mind wondrous melodies tumbled over one another. Seizing a pen, he started writing with amazing swiftness, page after page. For twenty-four days he laboured, night and day, pausing only occasionally for a rest or a bite of food.

At the end of the twenty-fourth day he threw himself on his bed, exhausted. On his desk lay the score of what is probably the greatest oratorio ever written, the Messiah. His last years were certainly beset with many difficulties, but he never again gave in to despair.

His resurrected faith remained victorious to the last. God touched the broken spirit of an old man and filled it with quickening life. And so with us, no matter how rough the world seems or how many times it has beaten you, this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

And this is the thing about which Peter is writing here, the Christian's victory in spite of adversity. Thus Peter wrote to the people of his day. And I believe that the message of these verses is good for our day also.

For there is victory in adversity because of three facts mentioned here by the Apostle Peter. The first fact concerns the certainty of purity through adversity. That you have in verse twelve.

The second fact concerns the reality of unity through adversity. That is verse thirteen. And the third fact concerns the bounty of prosperity through adversity.

The certainty of purity through adversity, verse twelve. The reality of unity through adversity, verse thirteen. The bounty of prosperity through adversity, verse fourteen.

Now may God, by his Spirit, illumine our understanding and give us grace to open our hearts and our minds to the message of this passage. First then, the certainty of purity through adversity. You have that in verse twelve.

Let us read the verse together again. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you? That is verse twelve. Notice the words.

Beloved, divinely loved ones. This is the form of greeting which was usual in the early church, and I think it is beautiful. Beloved, divinely loved ones.

It suggests the high regard and the deep concern and the wide scope and the long reach of that love, wherewith God loves his own. This is not the love of compassion merely, the love that is reserved for sinners, but the love of complacency. For he does not so much look down upon the saint in compassion, he looks across at him, in Christ his beloved Son, and he shall rest in his love when he contemplates those who love his name and love his Son.

It is even as though Peter had just said, O thou afflicted ones and tempest-tossed, fear not, for God still loves you, as he loves his only begotten Son, and that is a truly comforting thought, isn't it? So Peter writes here, of the acceptance of trial. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial? Stop at once thinking it a thing alien to you, as Christians, to endure the burnings of trial. It is not foreign to the Christian life.

You recall how Jesus said in the days of his earthly ministry, according to the record of the gospel, in the world you shall have tribulation, but fear not, I have overcome the world. Be of good courage. Patience is therefore of vital importance in the acceptance of trial, how we receive it, how we welcome it, how we regard it, how we interpret it, it is all of vital importance.

Without patience in the acceptance of trial, we cannot live a successful, a victorious Christian life. You remember that this patience, according to the teaching of God's word, is a very needed grace. In Hebrews 10 and verse 36 you have that.

You have need of patience, and I would say particularly in the face of adversity. Not only is it a needed grace, it is also unimparted power, strengthened with all might and to all patience, wrote Paul to the Colossians. It is an expected fruit.

Bring forth fruit with patience. You have that in Luke 8 and verse 15. It is also an appointed agent for tribulation worketh patience, yes, and patience experience.

That is Romans 5 and verse 3. It is an intended race. Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus. Impatience would treat the whole matter of trial and suffering as foreign and alien, whereas it is what we should expect.

Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and to do that we need to receive trial and accept it in the spirit of patience. In one of her books, Mrs. Pearsall Smith tells of an experience she had while she was attending a prayer meeting. It seemed that a poor woman rose to speak, and as Mrs. Smith looked at her she wondered what she could say, little thinking she was to bring a message to the soul of the woman who was listening.

Mrs. Smith heard her say that she had great difficulty in living the life of faith on account of the second causes that seemed to control nearly everything that concerned her. Her perplexity became so great that she began to ask God whether he was in everything, or only in some things. After praying for a few days she had what she described as a vision.

She thought she was in a perfectly dark place, and that there advanced toward her from a distance a body of light which gradually surrounded and enveloped her and everything else around her. As if a voice seemed to say, this is the presence of God. While surrounded with this presence all the great and awful things of life seemed to pass before her, fighting armies, wicked men, raging beasts, storms and pestilences, sin and suffering of every kind.

She shrank back at first in terror, but she soon saw that the presence of God so surrounded and enveloped each one of these things that not a lion could reach out its paw, nor a bullet fly through the air, except as his presence moved out of the way to permit it. And she saw that, let there be ever so thin a sheet, as it were, of this glorious presence between herself and the most terrible violence, not a hair of her head could be ruffled, nor anything touch her, unless the presence divided to let the evil through. She found it was so also with the small and annoying things of life.

So her difficulty vanished. Her question was answered forever. God was in everything, and the angel of his presence saved her.

And it is gloriously and wondrously true, prays the Lord, that between us and every adversity and every trial and every conflict that could possibly work evil or harm for us, there stands the unwavering presence of God. So Peter reminds his readers that they must accept trial under the hand of God, and think it not a strange thing, a thing alien to them, in the light of the statement of Jesus, in the world ye shall have tribulation, but fear not, I have overcome the world. And then Peter reminds his readers also of the importance of trial, the fiery trial which is to try you, that is, the burning furnace which is to purify you, even as the goldsmith's furnace purifies the gold.

For it is in the providence of God that he does permit testing to take place now. For even as Paul also reminds his readers, it is certain that we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ. Indeed, I don't think it is too much to say that the testings to which we pass now are like that machine in the royal mint.

It used to be used years ago, I don't know whether it is still in use, but every golden coin that came to it, if overweight was rejected to the right-hand side, if underweight was rejected to the left-hand side, and only

those coins which were perfect were allowed to pass on. And so would it be at the bema, the judgment seat of Christ. There, according to Paul's writings, the hidden things will be exposed.

You have that in 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 5. And the hidden counsels, the unseen thoughts and intents of the heart shall be made bare. The hidden works of all Christians will be exposed to and tested and shown of what sort they are. That's 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 3. The hidden motives will be examined and scrutinized on that day.

And the hidden character of the materials we have been using in service, that too will be exposed. You have that in 1 Corinthians 13, verses 11 to 13. On that day it will be impossible to escape the test of fire, for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

And only the golden things, the silver, the precious stones, will stand the test at last. And is it not the love of God that he permits the burning, cleansing, purifying, purging fires to burn now? For he desires we shall have things in us that will stand the test of the fire then. Now I know that this question of trouble and conflict and adversity, it does indeed cause us a great deal of concern.

But have you noticed, if you've gone on with the Lord for any length of time, have you observed that the things we feared most of all never happened? They did not come to pass, for God interposed his presence and his mercy between us and them. I am reminded of a soldier who came back from the war. He was an Irishman, so of course he returned to Northern Ireland.

And one day a lady was speaking to him and asking him a question. She asked, now in all your experiences at the front, what was the thing that struck you most of all? Well, he didn't want to answer for a long time, but she persisted. And then when she repeated the question, now tell me, please tell me, what was the thing that struck you most of all out of all your experiences? Well, he said, the thing that struck me most of all was the number of bullets that missed me.

And I suppose that the thing that strikes us most of all is the number of conflicts and troubles that seem to have missed us, although we certainly feared them. Isn't it true? Yes, you know it's true. Well then, let us take heart, take courage, and go on with God, and not allow these things to concern us.

You know J. Arthur Rank, the man in England who makes these films, and who is a Methodist I am told, he refers all his worries to Wednesdays. He has a Wednesday worry box. And everything that concerns him and worries him, why, whatever the day of the week, except Wednesday of course, then those things go into the box.

And it is his testimony that when he comes to the Wednesday, and opens the box, and looks at all these things that seem to be causing him so much worry and trouble, why, in the vast majority of cases, the things are solved themselves. And I think that's a good hint for you and me. Let us take our troubles and our worries to the throne of grace, and leave them there.

And surely the Lord will give us grace to face those things that just have to be faced. And the other things, why, he will handle them for us, and we have no need to be concerned with them. Let us not lose sight of the fact that trial is important, because within the trial lies the means of purifying the soul of its dross, cure, and now.

And isn't it better to stand the fire now, than we might be able to stand the fire then, as we at last appear at the judgment seat of Christ? Of course it is. Let us then adopt a Christian attitude toward trial. Peter writes

also of the confidence in trial which should mark the Christian attitude.

Beloved, he writes, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. Now that word happened, it means literally to go together. It speaks of the confluence of circumstances.

But listen, in the absolute sense, nothing ever merely happens to a Christian, for he is not the victim of circumstances. If it appears that circumstances seem to be controlling him, then the real Christian knows that someone is controlling the circumstances, and that someone is our heavenly Father. So this is his true confidence in the midst of trials and afflictions.

There are times, I know, when things seem to be simply impossible, and you can't see a way through. What happens then? Well, you trust the Lord, and he at once performs a miracle, and he makes a way through. Dan Crawford, of hallowed memory, tells of an experience he and his party had while they were returning to his African mission field after a furlough.

A stream had to be crossed. It was in flood. There were no boats.

Haste in getting back was important. So the missionaries camped and they prayed. And after a time, a tall tree which had battled with the river for a century perhaps, began to totter, and then it fell clear across the stream.

The royal engineers of heaven, said Dan Crawford, had laid a pontoon bridge for God's servants. There was no way over. There was no way across.

All right, God made a way. And in affliction and trial, it is good to have this confidence that God will always make a way of escape for us. When things seem impossible, and there appears to be no way over, God himself will intervene in mercy, and he will make a way where there is no way.

So Peter comes in the first instance, then, to remind his readers of the certainty of purity through adversity, that by this means God cleanses and purifies the soul, for the love of God is sufficient to meet our every need, that love never forgets, never fails, never fades, for it is a love that is planning for us all the time. There are occasions, it seems to me, when even little children can teach us older ones very many precious lessons on this matter. I can remember reading of a young minister in London, I think it was.

It seemed that his wife had died, and he was left with a care of his little girl. The parishioners thought that probably one of the relatives would come along and take care of the child, but nothing seemed to happen along that line, and so after some years he had got quite used to looking after the little one. When it seems on a certain Sunday, he took her into church and sat her in one of the front pews in the corner seat, and he went on with the service.

All went well until it came to the time of the sermon, and it appears that he was preaching that morning, and he made reference in his sermon about motherhood to the mother of Jesus, and in his remarks he said, think what a child's life is without a mother's love. Who else can tend, who can cherish, who can love like a mother? In the depth of his feeling, his strong voice halted as if for an answer, but it was not an answer that he expected, because suddenly his own little girl piped up in her sweet, childish voice and said, why, a father will do every bit as good, daddy dear? For she was remembering all the love that her father had showered upon her. Yes, and we can say tonight by the grace of God, and I believe we can say it too against the background of experience, that in our father's love and care, in his provisions of grace, in

his interventions of mercy, in his counseling, in his guidance, there are evidences and proofs and signs and tokens and seals that our God is a God who cares, and in love is planning for our ultimate good.

If only we could see the end from the beginning as God sees it, then I am sure it would affect our attitude toward this present time and this present life. God sees the perfect plan. We can well afford to leave things in his hands, for surely he will not fail, and he will not forget us, and he is careful concerning us.

Peter indeed would have his readers to understand that in this affliction and adversity to which they are passing, there is the certainty of purity if we allow God to have his way. Now look at the second great fact which we have mentioned at the beginning, the reality of unity through adversity. That is in verse 13, the reality of unity through adversity.

Let us read verse 13 again, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. This is the second great truth to be perceived in the Christian's victory in the midst of adversity. Here you have, first of all, the Christian's reaction to suffering.

This is not mere physical suffering, you know, some suffering because of some malady or disease, but a special sort of suffering, as we shall see. Far from thinking it a thing alien to him to have to pass through trials, the Christian is to rejoice inasmuch as he are partakers of Christ's sufferings. Rejoice! There are many things in the Christian life which appear to be legitimate grounds for rejoicing.

For instance, we are to rejoice because of our new identity. Your names are written in heaven, said Jesus to his disciples. Rejoice again for your new company, for you and others are walking in the truth, and that's a cause for rejoicing.

You have it in 2 John 4. Rejoice again for your new ecstasy and experience. Joy unspeakable and full of glory, says Peter in the first chapter and the eighth verse. Rejoice for your new ability.

Rejoice evermore. Thank God we can do that, you know. We are to rejoice and we can rejoice, for that is indeed a cause for continual rejoicing.

That's 1 Thessalonians 5 and 16. But now look here. Here is something that appears to be illogical, impracticable, illusionary.

Rejoice because you are counted worthy to suffer. But notice, the word inasmuch limits the command to a rejoicing because of that suffering which is special, for inasmuch means in this single thing. And we shall see in a moment what that thing is.

Rejoice. The Stoics had managed to adopt an attitude of reserve and uncomplaining acceptance of suffering which was in itself commendable. But I think it requires a Christian approach to be able to rejoice in adversity, to be able to rejoice in such circumstances.

Do you recall what the prophet Habakkuk has to say on this issue? He seems to have managed it all right. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Or as it really means, I will spin around with delight in the God of my salvation. And I believe it is the grace of God alone that could produce such a reaction to adversity and to suffering.

We are inclined to dwell on the adversity side of things, on the suffering side, and we wonder sometimes how it is that people seem able to bear and to endure such suffering, such adversity, such conflict. I recall reading of a Brahman who had accepted Christ as his Saviour. He had lost all his possessions by this act of faith.

His lands had been taken from him, his wife had left him, his children had gone, his home too had been confiscated. How do you manage to bear your sorrows, he was asked. And do you know what he replied? Why don't they ask me, how do you possibly manage to bear all the joys that he gives you? For, he said, I have a welling up joy within that overflows, so that I do not feel anything else but joy.

I must rejoice, I can't help doing anything else. Now there is the Christian's reaction to suffering, there indeed is the true Christian spirit. The reality of unity with his Saviour comes through the Christian's participation in suffering.

Inasmuch, now we come to this one thing, inasmuch in this thing that you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, or you are sharers in the sufferings of Christ. When men revile you because you are a Christian, you are sharing in his sufferings. When men say you are mad, when they twist your words to make them mean something else, when they accuse you of hypocrisy, when you are told you are filled with the devil, you are sharing his sufferings.

What shall you do then? Rejoice, says Peter, rejoice in this thing. Our sufferings, of course, are not mediatorial, we cannot share Christ's sufferings in that. They are certainly not meritorious, we cannot share Christ's sufferings in that.

Our sufferings as Christians are the sufferings which Jesus experienced as he walked amongst men. Sufferings, indeed, because of our stand for Christ. Sufferings as we are partakers of what he endured as he moved amongst men in their reviling, in their reproaching, in their antagonism, in all the hard and cruel things they said against him and about him.

In this thing we are participants in Christ's suffering and, praise God, as a means of suffering we share a sense of communion and fellowship and enjoy that glorious unity with our living Saviour. What a privilege, what an honour, what a dignity conferred upon you and me that in this world of time and sense we can serve our Saviour and share with him this suffering for his sake. You know, the Christian's expectation through suffering enables him to endure and to rejoice, for Peter goes on to say in this verse that when his glory shall be revealed he may be glad also with exceeding joy.

He is speaking here, of course, of the glorious second advent of Jesus Christ, the revelation or the apocalypses of Christ. I wonder whether you know that there are two distinct phases of the second advent. At least, I believe that scripture teaches it to be so.

Now, there are quite a number of people who are perplexed and puzzled about this thing. Let's take a little time then to discuss it together. There are two distinct phases of the second advent.

Oh, I know there's only one second coming, but that one second coming, so far as I can discern from my study and understanding of God's Word, is in two distinct phases. And until we see those phases, we can

become very puzzled indeed to harmonise certain apparently conflicting statements of scripture. Of course, there's no real conflict, you understand, because the Bible interprets itself and is always in harmony with itself.

But there appear to be certain conflicting statements about the second advent. Now, how can we summarise this? Let me say that there are perhaps seven outstanding differences between the first and the second phase of Christ's return again. For instance, nothing that is visible is to precede the coming of the Lord in the first instance, for that first phase of His coming could happen at any moment.

I said the other night from this pulpit that so far as I could see from my study of God's Word, there remains not a single prophecy to be fulfilled or promised to be consummated before Jesus Christ could return again. Now, someone may say, well, what about the scripture which says that the gospel of the kingdom must first be preached to all nations, and scriptures like that. Well, don't you see, my friend, once you perceive that there is a first and there is a second phase to the coming of Christ, you understand that I'm speaking about the first phase of His coming, that invisible appearing of Christ for His own people.

Think for a moment, the Thessalonian saints were waiting for God's Son from heaven, and they so expected Him to come at any time that they were really surprised when any of their number died instead of being called up to meet the Lord in the air. You have a look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 10, and you will see there quite clearly that there is this first phase of Christ's appearing. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 10.

Look, let's read it together. There's plenty of time. Let us read that scripture.

1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 10. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 10. It reads, And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Evidently, you know, these Christians were waiting with expectancy, because further on in his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul has to go to the trouble of explaining why it is that some had really died before the Lord fulfilled His promise and returned again. Now there you have it. That first phase of the second coming, the first phase of the second coming could take place at any moment.

But a great deal is to happen before the second phase of the coming of the Lord, and that second phase, you have a reference to it in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 2. It's easy to remember that scripture. 2, 2, 2. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 2. Now listen. That He be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Now you notice the difference. The day of Christ here. And before this, there is to be a falling away.

Paul goes on to explain. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. So you see, so far as the first phase of the second coming is concerned, nothing could prevent it from taking place.

But so far as the second phase of the second coming is concerned, the day of Christ, that cannot take place before the revelation of the man of sin, or the son of perdition. So you have the first stage of the second coming, and you have the second stage of the second coming. An invisible coming to take away his church, and a coming with great glory to destroy the antichrist.

Now that's the first difference. The second, at the rupture, that's the first stage of the second coming, the Lord comes for His saints. That's John 14 and verse 3. For you remember in that wonderful chapter, He said that He would come again.

And if I go away, I will come again, He said, and receive you unto myself. Again in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 15 to 17, you have that phase of the second coming, and that incident recorded. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 15 to 17.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Of course, the reference to the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God is believed by most commentators to apply to the Christian in this way. When the Roman army had come for the night, and then the dawn broke, and they were due to move away, they were called to attention and called to preparation by three blasts on the trumpet.

And those three blasts on the trumpet is believed to correspond with the three signs from heaven which will be known and understood by the initiated. The shout, the voice, and the trump of God, and then the dead in Christ shall rise first. Now all this relates to the first phase of the second coming, the rapture of the church, when the Lord comes for his saints.

But now turn to Jude, the epistle of Jude, and the fourteenth verse, and see what Jude has to say concerning the second coming. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints. There is a reference to the Lord coming with his saints.

In the first instance, it is the Lord coming for his saints. Now the saints that come with the Lord must surely have already gone into heaven, and the event to which reference is made in the fourteenth verse of Jude takes place after the marriage supper of the Lamb. Of course, there's no time to go into that tonight, but there it is.

Now thirdly, the first stage of the coming will in all probability be invisible to the world. The second stage of the coming will definitely be visible to all. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.

This is what we read in Revelation chapter one and verse seven. I know that in days gone by, people have said, well, how could that possibly be? We know that the world is round, and we know that the world is a big place. How is it that every eye could see him when he comes? Well, people are not saying that kind of thing in these days because of television to begin with, and for other reasons.

But we are not dependent upon modern inventions, or to give them their right name, modern discoveries. We believe what the Bible says. We don't explain it.

I couldn't analyze it, but I believe it. And the Bible tells me that when Jesus comes in the second phase of the coming, in the day of Revelation, that every eye shall then see him. Four three.

In the first phase, the Lord comes to rupture the church away from the great tribulation. In the second phase, he comes to execute judgment on the nations of the earth. You have that in Matthew 24 and verse 30.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth moan, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Now that is the second phase of the second coming, his coming with great power and glory. And of course, it is distinguished from that first phase.

Five. In the first instance, the Lord comes as the bridegroom for his bride. I think you have that taught in the parable of the ten virgins.

But in the second phase, he comes as the nobleman to reckon with his servants and to punish the unfaithful. You have that parable, of course, in Matthew 25, verses 14 to 30, and in Luke 19, verses 12 to 26. There again is a distinction drawn between the first and the second phases.

Six. In the first phase, the time of the first resurrection is marked, the raising of all true believers from the time of Adam to that moment. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.

The raising of the according to scripture at that time, but at the end of a thousand year reign on the earth. So, the first phase is marked by the first resurrection, but not so the second phase, which ushers in, of course, the millennial age at the end of which the wicked dead shall be raised to appear before the great white throne. You know, I know there's a lot of detail in here that I would like to discuss with you, but I can see my time is going and I must hurry on.

Seven. At the first appearing, the first phase, he comes to meet the saints in the air. That's 1 Thessalonians 4 and 7 as we have seen.

At the second phase, he will come to the earth and his feet shall stand on that day upon the Mount of Olives. That's Zechariah 14.4 and Acts 1.11. So, it is this glorious appearing, the second stage, which is in view here. And if we suffer now, says Peter, suffer because of our unity with him, then at that time you shall be glad also with exceeding joy.

At what time? At the time of his glorious appearing. This, then, is the Christian's expectation through suffering. And now we come to the third and final fact relating to the Christian's victory in adversity.

And it is the bounty of prosperity through adversity. Verse 14. We'll read that verse again to refresh our minds.

Verse 14 of the fourth chapter of 1 Peter, of course. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

The bounty of prosperity through adversity. Now, this prosperity is anticipated. You'll notice that.

If, that's the if of fulfilled condition, because it is so, ye be reproached for the name of Christ. It is on this account that prosperity will come. Reproached.

This word shows how positively it was suffering which involved persecution because of their relationship to Jesus Christ, which is in view here. This reproach falls on them for the name of Christ. So it is undeserved

suffering because of the name.

This speaks both of the cause of persecution and also of its character. Thank God for the name. And yet we know very well that because we bear the name Christian, that we are living for Jesus Christ.

On this account we are reproached. Perhaps not to the extent that these early Christians were, because many of them suffered martyrdom. And the form of reproach took that of persecution, bitter and hard to endure and cruel beyond all words.

But still, it is because of the name. And if we suffer and if we are reproached because of the name of Christ, then we are really anticipating spiritual prosperity. For you notice that this prosperity is also stated, Happy are ye.

What does that mean? Literally, prosperous are you. So, where the Christian is concerned, spiritually prosperous are you. Whatever the extent of the persecution, if it is associated with the name of Christ, there you have the mark of spiritual prosperity.

Do you recall what is recorded of King Uzziah in days gone by? Listen to the words again. And as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. Oh, the dangers attending material prosperity, how many they are and how varied.

And against them some of the most solemn warnings in have been uttered. The wise man writing in Proverbs the first chapter and verse 32 says, For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. And how true that is! And haven't we seen it taking place? We read of Israel that God gave them the desires of their hearts, but he sent leanness to their souls.

Listen, no one ever suffered loss through spiritual prosperity, through seeking the Lord. If you are suffering persecution for the sake of the name of Christ, cheer up. Your soul is therefore in a prosperous condition.

Don't go after material prosperity. Don't be concerned about the things of time. Don't allow yourself to be led astray into endeavours to amass riches at the expense of your soul.

For if you do, you will be a poor man in the end, for there are some things that money can never buy. I am thinking of a little girl who found a penny and went with it into a sweet shop. She looked at all the sweets in the bottles as little children will, and then she said as she pointed, I think I'll have that one.

Oh, said the shopkeeper, but that's worth two pennies. Huh? Well, she had another try. I'll have that one then.

Sorry, he said, but that's worth more than a penny too. And so she looked around and she said, well, isn't there anything worth a penny? No, he said, unfortunately, nothing at all. So she walked out and she left the penny on the counter.

Hey, said the shopkeeper, what about your penny? I don't want it, she said, it won't buy anything. Well, she wasn't exactly right, was she? And yet, isn't it true that in spiritual life, money will buy nothing at all? Peter then is reminding his readers, passing through persecution, enduring hardship, and experiencing adversity, that they are in a spiritually prosperous condition if they are suffering for the sake of the name of Christ, and that prosperity can never be taken from them. Notice again, this prosperity is demonstrated, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.

That is, for the glory and the spirit of God rests you. Glory here, I believe, is equivalent to the Shekinah glory of God in the Old Testament, the effulgence of God's presence. The spirit of God, of course, is the Holy Spirit, resteth upon you, said Peter.

Here it is the same word as in, come unto me and I will give you rest. Rest you from your labors and your burdens. So, the compensation for enduring persecution in the cause of Christ is that the believer hands over the conflict, the burden, the trial, the adversity, the misunderstanding, the persecution, the reproach, the suffering to the spirit of God.

And the Holy Spirit gives rest and peace and tranquility and release and refreshment and strength in exchange. It's a glorious exchange, isn't it? What a wonderful thing to know, that as we suffer persecution and adversity in the name of Christ and for the cause of Christ, as we do that, our souls are glowing with the glory of God and our souls are enriched with the spiritual prosperity. And the spirit of God takes all the hurt and all the pain and all the suffering, and instead He rests us.

He gives us refreshment and strength that is sufficient to meet our need. Oh, hallelujah! What a wonderful life this Christian life is, isn't it? And what a wonderful privilege we have to have the Holy Spirit resting us in this marvelous way. And you know, all this takes place here and now.

And the compensation in the future is to share in the glory of the returning Savior. You know, the Christian cannot possibly lose. He's always on the winning side.

However hard it may seem now, you believe God's Word. You believe what He has said. You accept the statement of Scripture.

You take this from the Apostle Peter as though he were speaking to you. And you, yes, and you also take it from him. And you'll find as you do so that the very rest of God, the tranquility and peace of the eternal, will come into your heart and soul.

The Christian cannot possibly lose in the end. I remember the words of Wendell Harris. Speaking on this very thing, he said, They may tear this Bible to shreds, but they can never rub the light of God off the faces of His Spirit-filled people.

Praise the Lord. Neither can they. So, we must take heart and be encouraged and comforted as we face the future.

And then briefly, this prosperity is manifested. On their part, He is evil spoken of. But on your part, He is glorified.

The unsaved, Peter seems to say, may despise Him, dishonor His name. But on your account, He is made manifest. As you live a consistent Christian life, you become a walking, breathing, living advertisement of Jesus Christ.

What a glorious vocation, isn't it? And how happy we are, how rejoicing we are in the contemplation of a life that brings glory to the Christ who is now despised. I think we ought to make up our minds here and now that we are not going to escape adversity and conflict. And it is a good thing if we don't escape it.

Because it is a means in the hands of God of trying and testing and perfecting and purifying us. And isn't it good of Him to present us with such a wonderful vista, to open up before our wandering gaze the awaiting

glory, and even more, to deposit something of that glory in us now, and to rest our very souls by the work and ministry of His Spirit, even as we are going through. When a great bell is cast in a foundry, it isn't lifted at once into its exalted place.

No, no. The founder takes a hammer and he beats the bell on every side. What is he doing? He is trying it for flaws.

And only when it has stood the test and has come through is it lifted up. So were the Christian of Peter's day, and the Christian of our day. Believe it, all believe it.

There is a benign purpose in every experience through which we pass. Believe this, and as you do so, you will live in perfect, continuing victory. Remember the three essential facts, then, won't you, that are mentioned by Peter here, facts which account for a Christian living in victory, though he is in adversity, the certainty of purity through adversity, the reality of unity with Jesus through adversity, and the bounty of prosperity through adversity.

When he has tried me, I shall come forth as pure gold, wrote one of old. And, praise the Lord, we are able from experience to re-echo the sentiment of that. We know that God is concerned for us.

We know that God really loves us. We know that God is planning for us. And if, as we go through life, we discover it to be not a place which is cushioned against every affliction and every jaunt, but a place of testing and proving and trying, a place of conflict and burden and suffering and persecution and reproach, it is only to the end that our souls may come through as pure gold, in which He will take delight and through which He will be glorified.

Oh, may God help us to take His precious Word to our very hearts and make His precious Word our very own and live by its precepts and follow its principles until Jesus comes again. Oh, may God bless you and bless His precious Word to every heart for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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