

Trials in the Christian Life

by Mack Tomlinson

Trials are a necessary part of the Christian life, testing and refining our faith, but they are temporary and will end.

Duration: 43:38

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:6

Topics: "Christian Suffering", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon by Peter addresses the theme of Christian suffering and trials, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of trials, their temporary nature, the necessity of trials for spiritual growth, and the grief they bring. The message encourages believers not to be surprised by trials but to rejoice in them, knowing they refine and purify faith. The sermon highlights the importance of finding joy in the midst of suffering and trusting in God's sovereignty through all trials.

Transcript

Peter, who was an apostle of suffering, a theologian of suffering himself, says this to the Christians who were dispersed in various places. He says this. He's talking about, in the first chapter, this salvation we have in Jesus Christ, His abundant mercy, wherein He's begotten us unto a living hope.

So He sets before them their salvation. And then he says in verse 6, In this, that is, in this salvation, you greatly rejoice, though, uh oh, you know, you hear some good news and the person says, but, so you know something, a little difference coming, though now for a season, now for a little while, if need be, you are in heaviness or you have been grieved by various trials. Why, Lord? Why, O God? Is this happening to me as your child? Verse 7 answers it.

That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it, that is your faith, is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation or the appearing of Jesus Christ. And turn over to chapter 4, two verses. Peter continues this theme, which he does throughout the book of suffering.

Verse 12 and 13, chapter 4, Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing is happening to you, but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. I had planned several weeks ago, after speaking on the importance of singing, and I knew I was coming today and next Lord's

Day, I was assigned the task of preaching. I don't decide when I preach, I just preach when I'm told.

These guys kind of decide that. So they decided this Sunday and next Sunday. So weeks ago I said, I think I'm going to preach on the importance and the value of trials and suffering.

And next Sunday, God willing, if I live, I'll preach on death. How to view death, facing death, grappling with death. And so today, fiery trials, Christian suffering.

Why are we surprised by it? Peter says, don't be. But we always are. We're never ready for it.

We want good news. No one wants to suffer, right? Christians don't want to suffer. Unbelievers don't want to suffer.

No one welcomes hard times. Something hard comes and you don't say, oh boy, man, I've been looking forward to this. No.

Let me define a trial. I'm not talking about a legal trial, a courtroom trial. Trial, suffering, hardship.

Trial. Think about this definition because it's really true. A trial is an event or an experience.

That's what a trial is. No matter what kind it is, a trial that you go through is an event or an experience that comes to you that brings suffering. What kind of, how can we define suffering? Pain, sorrow, sadness, grief, hurt.

That kind of sums it up, doesn't it? A trial is an event or an experience that brings into your life without expectation, without warning, without notice. You don't get an email or a text message that says, you know, have you ever opened a Chinese cookie, fortune cookie, and it says hard times are on the way soon. No, we never, we never are told that these things are coming.

But when they come, it brings suffering to our lives. What kind of suffering? Pain, sorrow, sadness, heaviness of spirit, tears, grief, hurt inside. And nobody wants that.

But you know what? The reality is suffering and trials are mankind's lot in this life. Suffering and pain comes with being born. What did Job say about that? Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

You get born in this world, you live long, you're going to have pain, disappointment, hurt, others going to do you wrong, disappointments come, heartache, grief. No one, no one is exempt. The rich, the wealthy, the famous, or the unknown, the poor person, it doesn't matter.

There is no respect of persons regarding this. Some kinds of trials, some kind of trials, both Christians and unbelievers. Suffer, right? Hardships come on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Some trials are unique to unbelievers. And the greatest trial, which is eternal, awaits the unbeliever, the one who doesn't know Jesus Christ, when they die. They will have eternal suffering.

But some trials are unique to the Christian. Christian suffering and hardship. Now, Peter is a New Testament theologian, and he is a theologian on suffering, trials and suffering.

In this first epistle, every chapter he addresses the subject of trials and suffering. Every chapter in 1 Peter speaks loudly, rings this note. We ought to read it often.

We ought to read it especially when we are going through suffering of any kind. Chapter 1 talks about being grieved and made to feel heavy and sorrow by various trials, and our growing into being able to rejoice in them. Chapter 2, he talks about enduring the grief of suffering and bearing up in it patiently.

We have to grow in that. Chapter 3, he talks about the blessing or the blessedness of suffering because you are doing good. Chapter 4, he talks about arming yourselves with the mind of Christ to view suffering rightly.

And learning not to be surprised by suffering or to think it strange or unique, that something unique is happening to you that nobody else is going through. And not being ashamed of or embarrassed by your sufferings. And in chapter 5, he talks about witnessing suffering, beholding suffering and finding comfort that you are not alone in your suffering.

That many others are going through the same thing. You will not face any sadness, sorrow or pain that others are not going through simultaneously with you somewhere. And probably some believers.

Peter's admonition and teaching on this subject was real to him. Because after he wrote 1 Peter, he wrote a second epistle. And soon after that second epistle, Peter and his wife together were martyred by crucifixion.

They suffered. They knew what suffering was. Peter had suffered.

He would suffer. And so he's not just speaking theory here. And he knew when he wrote this first epistle, he knew that there were believers scattered because of persecution and suffering who were hurting.

Who were damaged emotionally. Who were needy. Who were struggling.

Who had lost much because of their faith in Christ. He knew that. And so he wrote this epistle especially to those who were suffering.

Now, go back to verses 6 and 7 in chapter 1. And we're just going to see in chapter 1 what he says about this. And in chapter 4, we're going to see a couple of quick applications at the end. What we're to do.

How we're to respond. So, in these two verses, 6 and 7 in chapter 1, there are several important truths. Let's look at verse 6 again.

He says, in this, that is in your salvation, you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials. Truth number one, the end of the verse, trials vary. There are many kinds.

They come in many shapes, colors if you will, experiences. The word, the picture here is multifaceted. All kinds of situations in life.

Every single kind of different situation and trial can come to us. All different kinds. Physical suffering.

Mental suffering. Where physically you're okay, but mentally you're going through great hardship. Financial suffering.

Emotional suffering. Spiritual suffering. Domestic trials.

And think about all the different kinds that there are. Just let me name a few, even though this won't even begin to touch them all. Anxiety.

Depression. Discouragement. Disappointment.

Losses of different kinds. Like the Neely's are facing. Death has touched this church in a big way in the last two weeks.

Some of us knew well Clyde McKnight and we were at his memorial. Erica's grandfather recently passed away and she couldn't be there. Jeff's grandfather, Jeff Price.

Jeff spoke at his grandfather's funeral yesterday in Amarillo and they were very close. Krista's mother this week. Phillip's mother this week.

And a friend of some of us in Sanger who died tragically. All kinds of deep experiences and various kinds of suffering. Rejection.

Betrayal. Various types of persecution. From family rejecting you or being hateful toward you because you're a Christian and because you're different and because you make them feel uncomfortable just by living the Christian life.

All the way to what Peter and his wife suffered after his second epistle. Mistreatment. Sickness.

Chronic pain that you can't escape. Growing old and all that comes with that. The changes.

The pains. The difficulty to sleep. The pressures.

Moms with young children. The pressures of constant responsibility brings stress. And stress is a hardship.

Family needs. Family problems. Demonic attack and spiritual battles.

Exhaustion. The pressure pressing down on you with many responsibilities that you have to bear. Martin Lloyd-Jones said the last year of his life he said, I'm tired of responsibilities.

And you can feel that when you get older. Always something to do. Always something to be responsible for.

Always something to take care of. Always someone to help. No relief from responsibilities.

And that brings pressure and stress. Helplessness in situations you can't control that make you so sad. God is not like you and I. And we are not like Him.

We would not want any of each other to go through sadness and sorrow. We would protect one another from it if we could. We would keep one another from going through it.

We would not want any of our children to get cancer. We would not want any loved one to die. But God's not like us.

There are multifaceted types of trials and sufferings that we go through. Many, many different kinds. And if we have 120 people here today, there's probably 120 different types of struggles, problems, needs,

realities going on in our lives.

Multifaceted. Peter says, agreed by various trials. Trials of all different kinds.

It's not one thing, it's another. It's not physical, it's emotional. If it's not family, it's people at work.

All kinds of trials. Peter said there's various kinds. Secondly, then notice what he said.

Well, before we go there, I thought of this passage. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 11. Paul shows this.

1 Corinthians, I'm sorry, 2 Corinthians 11. And he kind of gives an autobiographical list. And I want you to, it's easy to read through this and not let it soak in.

Think about each one of these and the blows it would have been. The hardship some of these would have been. He says in verse 23, in chapter 11 of 2 Corinthians, in defending his apostleship, he says this.

Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more. Notice his list of his experiences. In labors more abundant.

In stripes above measure. That means I've been beaten so many times I've lost count of the number stripes that I've received. In prison more frequently.

I've often said when Paul would go to a new town, he wouldn't check into the Holiday Inn. He'd just check into the jail first because he knew he was probably going there anyway. He ended up in jail, prison all the time.

In prison more frequently. In deaths often, meaning I've been this close to death so many times I can't count it. You ever been close to death? If you haven't, there's no way to relate to this.

So when you've almost died and you've escaped or you've been sick unto death, or when something you go through physically has brought you to face death, and that's coming for all of us, it makes things very, very, very real. In deaths often he says, from the Jews five times I received 40 stripes minus one. So the Jews beat Paul with the legal Jewish beating five different times with 39 stripes.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times shipwrecked.

Now think of being shipwrecked. You're shipwrecked in the water and not in a day have I been in the deep. That means he grabbed on to some plank of wood or something and he was floating in the ocean for 36 hours.

How'd you like to do that? In journeys often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city and in the wilderness and in the sea, and among false brethren, people who are pretending to be Christians but aren't because they want to get it. In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness where he didn't have enough clothes even to keep himself warm. Multi-faceted trials.

None of us can relate to Paul, right? Various ways the enemy sometimes attacks too. The Lord Jesus, remember? He was tempted in the physical realm, turned these stones into bread. He was tempted in the middle realm, in the spiritual realm.

Three different type of temptations and testings our Lord went through. Outward trials of circumstances, finances, sickness, job, family relationships, others. Inward trials, even if nothing's going on outwardly that's difficult.

Inward trials of discouragement, heaviness of spirit, depression, anxiety, doubt, stress, mental pressure. Various kinds of trials. Well, secondly, notice in verse 6 what Peter says.

Back to 1 Peter 2, 1 Peter 1, verse 6. It tells us the next thing about them. And these aren't in order. I'm not giving these in order in the text.

But he says this. In this you greatly rejoice, though now... Notice the next phrase. For a season, for a little while.

What does that tell us? That trials not only are multifaceted, but they are temporary. Praise God, I like that. Temporary.

What you're going through, you're not always going to go through. The hardest things you can go through in life are for a season. They will end.

For some of you, school is hard. Man, it's tough. You just got to discipline yourself and work at it and put up with grief in the academia because you have a goal.

I'm going to graduate. It's going to be over. And then guess what? The real testings of life come.

Welcome to the real world. Trials are temporary. Not for the unbeliever.

Death brings eternal suffering. But trials are for a little while. ESV says for a little while.

For a season. There are short seasons when trials affect us. Maybe sickness.

Many of us have been ravaged by stomach virus, flu in the last two weeks. Maybe yours lasted a day. Maybe yours lasted five days.

But there are seasons. Sometimes they're short. Sometimes they're longer.

But no trial for the Christian is permanent or eternal. And we should rejoice in that. We should take hope in that.

We should thank God for the great reality of that. You know, trials and suffering are very much like the seasons of the year. I was in Wyoming this past weekend.

They said, you know, we have a long winter. And we really look forward to spring. And I said, well, come on down to Texas in July and August and have a long heat wave.

So it depends on where you live and what you're going through. But trials and seasons of suffering are like the seasons of the year. They change.

There's times of springtime where you're joyful and things aren't hard. Then there's times of winter or the extreme heat, fiery trials of summer. And we go through those.

Whatever one goes through, though, it is not forever. Peter says it's for a little while. Remember the Lord Jesus in John 16.

He told His disciples that He was going away. He said, now, for now, sorrow has filled your heart because of what I've said. But it's to your advantage that I go away because I'll send the Comforter.

And their joy was going to then be full. Sorrow comes, weeping comes for a moment. But joy, the Bible says, comes in the morning.

So whatever you're going through, it's not going to always last. God will cause that season to end and He will let there be a little while for that trial. Well, what's next? Notice this.

Verse 6, even though now for a little while, what's the next phrase? If need be. If need be. Lord, I don't need this to happen.

Trials are needed. We don't believe it. We don't think so.

We don't want it. We don't welcome them. We don't like them.

But Peter said if need be. You are in heaviness through manifold trials. Various kinds of suffering.

Trials are necessary for God's ultimate purpose in our lives. Everything any of us have been going through in recent days, the Lord says is necessary for us. It is needful.

And you calculate a death in that. You calculate in this past year, we've heard of a young father whose wife passed in her 30s and left him six children. A young mother whose husband passed in his 30s and left her two children.

A young father who drowned in Austin several weeks ago and left his wife, young wife, with eight or nine children. We can't calculate in our minds that that's needed. And it's certainly not wanted, but God sees that it's best.

And He says it's needed. All that comes to the Christian, from the greatest suffering to the least little inconvenience that irritates us, is needed. Trials are temporary, but they're needed.

And we could go on and talk about that, but you know, you think about, why was it needed with Job? Why did Joseph, who was innocent, need to be in prison? Why did Paul have to go all through that? The reasons aren't seen when you're going through it. Peter says, now for the present, no trial seems joyful, but grievous, but afterward, afterward. Then you begin to see, you gain perspective, but these things are needed.

But then fourth, notice verse 7. He says in verse 7, that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire. In the end of verse 6, you have been grieved by various trials. Trials are not only multifaceted and temporary and needed, the Bible tells us that they put us into grief.

You will not feel joy when a trial comes. You feel grief. We grieve.

Peter says, you have been grieved through various trials coming. Every time a trial or heartache or suffering comes, you feel this. This feeling of shock, woundedness, pain, sorrow in your heart, heaviness

of spirit, sadness cast down.

And you can rightly say, I'm so sad because they're going through this. I'm so sad they're having to face this, and then I can't do more. It's a grievous process to go through some things.

And grieving is right. It's the way God made us. And you cannot snap your fingers and it's gone.

You cannot tell someone you shouldn't go through that or you shouldn't feel that way. Don't ever be so foolish to say that to someone that's hurting. At least Job's three friends were wise enough to be quiet for a week before they said something.

Trials hurt. They bring grief in our souls and sadness. And that's why Peter says in verse 7 that these things are a testing by fire.

Fire. You know, when astronaut John Glenn in 1962 had the successful mission into outer space, the heat shield, it looked like it was malfunctioning. Malfunctioning.

He had a signal there. NASA had the signal in their headquarters. The heat shield alarm went off.

And they knew it in NASA on the ground, but John Glenn spoke to him and said, gentlemen, it's getting pretty hot up here. I think there's an issue. And they told him, you do this.

And he said, why? And they said, we can't tell you right now. Just do what we're telling you to do. And the heat shield held.

But he said, it's getting pretty hot. Beloved, when trials come to you and me that are so hard and sad and difficult, some of them you don't think you're going to make it through them. You don't find any reserves within you to rise up and be strong.

All you feel is the heat and the hardship. Because these trials, when Peter says they're the fiery trials, he's picturing the refinement and the purification that God is doing in us through the trials. It's refinement.

It's purification. It's eliminating the dross. The fiery trial is pictured this way in the Bible.

The root word is an experiment. I wasn't very good in science class in high school, but we had to do some experiments in class. We'd do this to try to get this result and do this, this experiment.

Fiery trials are God's experiment to bring us into an experience that turns up the heat to do what? Destroy you? No. Refine you. Purify you.

To burn off the dross. To burn off the carnality. And to test our what? Faith.

The Lord Jesus said, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you. He's asked permission for you that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

Fiery trials are to purify your faith. You know, we don't trust God when everything's perfect. Often.

And one man said, only in the hot furnace of affliction do we as Christians let go of the dross and the carnal things which we cling to. In suffering and in trials, we learn to pray best. In suffering and trials, we endeavor, we feel the need to trust God more.

We feel the need more of Him. And our hearts go to Him in desperation because we feel the pain of needing Him to help us. And as Johnny Erickson taught us said, without a doubt, what helps us most in accepting and dealing with suffering is a right view of God, learning who He truly is and knowing that He's in control.

My friend Sam Storms said this, God does not give a witness to the world by taking His people out of suffering, but rather by demonstrating His grace through us in the midst of pain. Now, a couple of applications. Turn to chapter 4. In chapter 4 and verses 12 and 13, Peter tells the Christians to do two things.

Verse 12, he tells them, number one, don't think this strange when you go through trials. It's the first thing we do, but we have to renew our mind. Don't think this is strange.

Don't be surprised. Learn to not be surprised. Don't go into mental confusion.

Well, I thought if God loved me, well, I thought this, well, I thought that. Don't go into mental confusion. Don't think it's strange.

Don't be confused. See it clearly. See it rightly.

See it biblically. Read 1 Peter every week if you have to, but do not think it's strange when fiery trials come to test you as though some weird, strange, unique thing's happening. Don't think it's strange.

That's our first response. We've got to get there, right? And secondly, he says in verse 13, here's the right response. Rejoice.

Rejoice to the extent that you are becoming a partaker of Christ's sufferings. Now that's a little bit of a tall order, isn't it? When tears are flowing, when you're hurting, when the cloud of darkness is over you, rejoice. Really? Would any of us have the audacity or the courage to say, seriously, God? You're telling me to rejoice? That's what he says.

Rejoice. You know, trials, why? Why should we rejoice? Because trials can bring us to know Christ more deeply and there's the joy. Trials can turn to gold.

Trials can bring joy. Trials can be used to allow you to find joy in the Lord in spite of the trials. Let me read something that Spurgeon said.

He's being very honest. C.H. Spurgeon, he said this. You know, he was very sick in the last few years of his life.

He was very, very sick. Chronically sick. And he said this, I am trying to find joy in my sickness, but I'm not there yet.

I find joy when it's over and I do bless God for any good result that may come from it, but when the pain is on me, it is difficult to be joyous about it. And so this means my sanctification is very incomplete. Romans 5. You don't need to turn there, but Romans 5, 3-5 speaks to this.

Romans 5, 3-5. Paul says this, we also glory, rejoice, in tribulation. Why? How? Knowing that tribulation or trials or testing produces perseverance.

You've got to just go through it. You're going to make it through it. The Neleys are going to make it through this week this week bearing two moms.

Their children and grandchildren are going to be helped by it. They're facing the reality of life and they're going to be deepened in their family relationship and Philip and Christa will be comforted with the comfort that God gives to be able to comfort others. Tribulation produces perseverance.

I walked Amai with pleasure. She chattered all the way. It left me none the wiser for all she had to say.

I walked Amai with sorrow and never a word said she, but oh, the things I learned from her when sorrow walked with me. Tribulation produces perseverance. That's why we can rejoice.

You can only rejoice in the eternal reality of truth and rejoice in the Lord and sing in the fire. There's a book. Get it.

By Faith Cook. Singing in the Fire. It's a marvelous collection of biographies of men, women, and children who suffered deeply and they found joy in Christ to the end.

Singing in the fire. That's what we have to learn to do because Paul says that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance produces what? Character. And character produces hope.

And hope doesn't disappoint. Why? Because through that, the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit. There's a knowledge of God through that process that doesn't come any other way.

So, it's a glorious thing. Beloved, find joy. Go looking for joy in your trials.

Someone texted this to me a few days ago. I'm going to close by reading it. It's quite good.

It's taken from Jesus being on the lake with the disciples and in the storm, in the storm, Jesus said to them, take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid. Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid. Listen then to the voice of Jesus in the storm.

It is I who raised the tempest and I will control it. It is I who sent your affliction and I am with you in it. It is I who kindled the furnace and it is I who will watch the flames and bring you through it.

It is I who formed your burden, who carved your cross, and who will strengthen you to bury it. It is I who mixed your cup of grief and will enable you to drink it with meek submission to me. It is I. I make the clouds my chariot and I clothe myself with the tempest as with the garment.

The night hour is my time of coming and the dark surging waves are the pavement upon which I walk. It is I. Do not be afraid. It is I, your Savior, your Brother, your Friend.

I am causing all the circumstances of your life to work together for your good. It is I who permitted the enemy to attack you and blast you. It is I who allowed the unkindnesses to wound you and the needs to press down upon you.

Your affliction did not spring out of the ground but came down from above. I have sent all in love. This bereavement shall not always bow you to the earth nor drape your life in gloom.

It is I who ordered, arranged, and controlled it all. In every stormy wind, in every dark night season, in every lonesome hour, in every rising fear, the voice of Jesus is heard saying, Take courage, it is I. Do not

be afraid. How are you doing in your trials? God is going to help us all the way through.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for the truth that Peter has spoken, words of life. Thank You for Paul telling us that our tribulations are producing perseverance in us and then character and then hope and then the love of God poured out in our hearts.

Thank You, Lord, for Peter's instruction and his admonition about our trials that they are made up of all kinds of various things, that they're temporary, and that they bring grief because they're fiery trials. But Lord, we're to not think them strange and instead we're to rejoice in them. So equip us, Lord, to live for You all our days because trials will come all the time.

But You said in the world you'll have tribulation. But You said, Lord, be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

So help us. Give us grace. Renew our minds.

And Lord, be more real to us, we pray, than the things that we face in trials. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/VZnRHuZxQyc.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mack-tomlinson/trials-in-the-christian-life/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net