

1 Peter 1

by Robert F. Adcock

The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to suffering with faith, hope, and trust in God, and reminds us that suffering can be a means of purification and refinement to bring us closer to God.

Duration: 36:39

Scripture: Matthew 5:44, Luke 23:34, Romans 12:17, 1 Peter 1:7-9, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Peter 3:9

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a life committed to God, even in the face of trials and conflicts with the world. He encourages believers to trust in God's strength and power, rather than relying on their own abilities or influence. The preacher highlights the example of Jesus Christ, who suffered without sinning, as the perfect model for enduring suffering. He also emphasizes the refining process that trials and testing bring to believers' lives, comparing it to the process of refining gold to remove impurities and make it beautiful and useful.

Transcript

I thought tonight we might look in 1 Peter chapter 1, the next reading is verse 3 of 1 Peter chapter 1, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath forgotten us again unto a living hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that faith is not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be you are in heaven through manifold trials, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found under praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Now, in chapter 2, verse 21, for even here unto where you call, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his step, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again.

When he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously, who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness by whose stripes you were healed. For ye were a sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherds and bishops of your souls. There's a subject here that perhaps is not one that we like to think in

terms of it applying to us, because it's an unpleasant subject.

It concerns itself with suffering, trial and testing in Christian life. There's a title given to the Lord Jesus Christ in the 50s. He is the man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

I don't know how many times in the course of your life you've used this expression, good grief. But what is there good about grief? Well, perhaps it's the way that we look at it. If we look at it through the eyes of God, and from God's viewpoint, much can be accomplished through grief in our lives.

Paul, the writer of Romans, says, Tribulation worketh faithfully. There's so much that can be developed in the way of Christian character and maturity in the Christian life if we know how to handle grief and suffering. I suppose you've heard that it will usually serve one of two purposes.

It will make us better, or it will make us bitter. And I have in the course of my Christian life met Christians that were embittered because of very unpleasant circumstances in their lives. Unfortunately, they blamed God for it.

Closer examination would reveal it was their own fault. And Peter could tell us, if you suffer for righteousness' sake, that's great. That's great.

You do it patiently, you know how to endure, you know how to handle it, you know how to have the right attitude toward it, and that's great. But if you suffer when you've done wrong, and you gripe about it, and you complain about it, you know there's no glory for God in that. And there may be, but there are many of God's dear people today that many of the unfortunate circumstances in their lives are the result of disobedience and a failure to obey God's word.

Because God does chasten his own children. The chastening of the Lord, when it comes, is not pleasant. But we bring it upon ourselves.

God is a just God. He is a righteous God. He doesn't inflict us with things that are unpleasant just for the sake of seeing us squirm like some worm that is in the fire.

That's not the purpose at all. Our God, when he permits trial and difficulty to touch our lives, he has a purpose for us. What we need to do is to be reconciled to his will be done.

In the course of what we have to say, we will, of course, refer to several examples, some of them human. And there are many Christians that have borne a good testimony in suffering. There are others, unfortunately, that have not.

But we have one supreme example of suffering set before us in the word of God that, indeed, is above all others, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter, I believe, wrote out of his own experiences concerning suffering. I thank Paul for the experiences that he shares with us concerning suffering and trial.

It wasn't with a view that he would, in a sense, attract attention to himself and say, Look how much I suffered. The sharing experience was one in which he trusted that others would be encouraged to know what he had written. God doesn't allow us to be tempted or tested beyond that which we are able to bear, and he always provides a way of escape.

So when we adopt the right attitude toward difficulties that touch our lives, it can be a blessing to us. If we are only ready to grumble and complain, it'll certainly not be a blessing to us, and we won't be a blessing

to anyone else, and God will get no glory from us. So it's so important in the Christian life that we know how to handle grief and suffering.

I'm one of those people that had a misconception of what the Christian life was like after I was saved. I said, Well, I'll never have any more problems in this life. Everything has been solved.

It's going to be beautiful. It's just going to be a lovely primrose path all the way to glory. How wrong I was.

It didn't take long before things happened in my life that I didn't understand, but they served a purpose. One thing for sure, Peter can remind us that these things are seasonal. They're just a part of this life.

None of the things that distress us now will follow us home to Heaven, praise God for that. There will be no distressing things happening in Heaven. There'll be no tears in Heaven.

There'll be no death in Heaven. There'll be no sorrow. There'll be no pain and suffering.

All of these things are a part of our humanity. They're a part of this life. We live in a world that is under the curse of sin, the whole creation groaning.

I read that a lady somewhere reported to a local newspaper that she had a tree in her yard that was groaning. It was groaning, and they had put a pipe or something down in the ground next to the roots of this tree, and sure enough, you could put your ear there and you could hear groans coming out of the ground around the roots of that tree. You're charging fifty cents to listen to those groans.

But if the whole creation groaneth, certainly it reminds us of the curse that is imposed upon everything that dwells upon the face of the earth. And we are part of this creation. We are the redeemed of the Lord as Christians, men and women, but we are not excused from being a part of a divine plan and purpose that God has, and suffering and sadness in this life play a very important part.

If you find someone and they've escaped all of the unpleasant things that beset men and women in this life, I'd like to look at that life. I'd like to see it. I've seen those that have suffered great privation and suffering and been victorious, and that indeed is something that rejoices a soul.

But to see someone that professes to be a Christian and he can say honestly, I've never had anything unpleasant touch my life, I'd like to look at that life. I believe there's something wrong, because I believe, as I said before, Christian character and maturity are best developed sometimes in the experience of trial and testing. And Peter could remind us that I believe that there is a way that this is accomplished through trial and suffering.

He takes a very simple illustration from life, and I reminded a brother one time that I wondered about this business of purifying gold and bringing forth the purest gold that was possible. And he reminded me that there were a lot of factors involved in accomplishing that. He said, you know, too much heat is bad for the gold when it's in the smelter's pot.

Too little heat is not good either. You must know just the right amount of heat to apply to that gold to refine it so that it comes out pure gold. All of the dross, all of the slag that's been taken away, all of the impurities of this world are removed from that gold, and it's made into something that is beautiful and useful.

Well, isn't it wonderful to know that our lives are in the hands of a God that knows just how much fire, how much testing and trial to apply to these lives of ours to bring forth something that is beautiful and for the

glory of God? Beloved, we're in safe hands. Our God makes no mistakes. And those things that at the time may seem to be ever so difficult to bear, the apostle Paul says, he gives you the grace that's sufficient to bear it.

There was a man that, out of his own experience, did not like suffering and trial. And he cried out to God on at least three occasions, take away that thorn in my flesh. Because he could see, it was revealed to him that this messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him.

And he didn't like it. And you don't like it, and I don't like it when we're tried and tested in such a way that life becomes miserable and unpleasant. We don't like it, but we learn to adjust our will to his will and his way.

The Lord Jesus Christ looked forward to that cross with full awareness that for that hour came he into the world. But I recall that in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he knew what was in that cup. He knew what was in that cup and the bitterness of all that cup represented to him.

And he would be made sin for us, he that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And you know, that holy, righteous soul is shrank back. It's shrank back from the thought of being made sin for us.

Now, you and I, we know what sin is. It has touched our lives, because all have sinned. Many of us have felt very comfortable with sin.

So often, even today, as believers in the Lord Jesus, we sometimes feel very comfortable in situations that are so unlike our God, and certainly don't represent holiness and righteousness. But the Lord Jesus Christ, in the holiness of his own soul, he that knew no sin, sin to him was something that was repulsive. And he knew that he was going to be made sin for us, and he shrank back from it.

And I'm not saying for a moment that we cry unto God, O sin, trial and testing into my life. Use it as fire to purify me and to make me into something that's beautiful, for your glory and honor. I'm not going to pray that prayer.

I think we all aspire to be more and more like the Lord Jesus. And perhaps we have to admit the two go hand in hand, that if we're going to be like him, we'll have to be subjective to many of those things that are not pleasant in this life. The Apostle Paul would take his life, and certainly he was a man that suffered, and in writing to the Corinthian church, he could say, this life afflicts us.

Mind you, he was a man that had been subjected to all sorts of humiliation in this life. He was a man that had been beaten because of his testimony for the Lord Jesus, the stand that he took. He had fought wild beasts, all sorts of indignities he had suffered at the hands of other men.

He said, you know, but this light affliction in this life, what we're experiencing here, just light affliction, is not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be ours by and by. I often think about it, will we reflect when we get home to glory, looking back upon this life, and perhaps laugh about how seriously sometimes we took some of these things, we felt so rejected, we felt so fearful? We'd probably be ashamed of the way we reacted in some of those situations. I think the secret can be found in the words of the psalm, in Psalm 23, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

Why? Because I know you're with me. And we'll never walk along this pathway, no matter how difficult it is, that we need ever forget someone has already been that pathway, and that's the Lord Jesus. He's already been there.

He's already experienced that. And he is a Savior that is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. He knows our flame.

He knows that we're made of dust. He knows how sensitive we are sometimes to these things that are so unpleasant. He knows all about it.

I will never leave you, nor forsake you. I am with you in that circumstance of life. Those that are bound as if I was bound with them, says the writer to Hebrews.

Those that suffer trial and persecution, I relate to that experience. So he is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. There's another expression that goes, Life is made up of ups and downs.

I think it's the comic strip Peanut. Lucy says, I want all of mine to be uppers. I don't want any downs.

And that's the way we feel, too. We want every day to be a day in which we're up and on top of the world, the situation. We have to admit, some days we're just down, and we seem depressed, and the circumstances of life seem to overwhelm us.

But we're warned that we're not to live under our circumstances. We're to be above those circumstances, because we're pictured in the Scriptures as being more than comforts for him that loved us and gave himself for us. You would think, with the warnings that we have in the word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that I'm going to leave you my peace.

But in this world, you're going to have tribulation. But you be of good cheer, I've overcome this world. Now, why should we expect anything less from a world that is rejecting the Son of God, a world that crucified the Lord of glory? Why should we expect anything less? When we identify ourselves with him, a protestant testimony for the Lord Jesus in a dark world, it will probably bring the same reaction from the world that it brought toward him while he was here.

Yet we act surprised. Peter says in the same epistle, Do you think it so strange that these fiery, fiery experiences in life, things that are so unpleasant, things that burn, things that scorch, things that steal the flight and bring pain and suffering and anguish? Why do you think it's such a strange thing that this is happening to you? Well, it shocked me. I must have been like Peter at the outset.

I thought that it had resolved all of the problems that I would have in this life. But I soon discovered that problems, trial and testing, have a place. But Peter gives to us the perfect example for suffering, and that is the person of our Lord Jesus.

He left us an example that we should follow in his steps. If you want to follow someone and have that perfect assurance you'll never be led astray, never be deceived, you can faithfully follow the Lord Jesus. You can always with assurance say, I know that if I walk in these footsteps, if I walk by the example that he has set, I'll have a life that is well-pleasing to God.

We have to be careful in whose footsteps we walk in, because sometimes there are those that have a very bad example, and we need to be warm. Specifically, when I think about the cross, and I would have us to

go there and think about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. This was an injustice.

He was falsely tried. All of the accusations that were brought against him by so many, they were false. He was betrayed by someone very near to him, and finally he was hung upon a cross.

And out of all of the experience of being treated so unjustly, he never reviled, he never said one scathing word of rebuke that's recorded in the Word of God against those that were inflicting all of that hurt upon him. It indeed to me, is one of those occasions when I just feel like saying, hallelujah, what a savior. When upon the cross, with that setting being what it is, and all of the hatred, all of the bitterness of those that were inflicting hurt upon him, and they were taunting, he saved others.

Let him save himself now. He looks down, and he doesn't say, I'm coming back again, and I'll get you when I come back. That seems so natural to me.

I'll get you for that. I'll punish you for what you're doing to me. He says, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

Now, how often in the experience of this life have we ever handled a situation in which we were being persecuted? Perhaps there were untrue charges made against us. Someone was trying to slander us, or something of that nature. How did we respond? How did we react? I think that Peter and Paul, again, were in perfect harmony.

Peter says in the third chapter that we're not to render evil for evil, or railing for railing. You've heard people get in a shouting match, and you could hear all of those things going back and forth. That wasn't true of the Lord Jesus, not even upon the cross.

No doubt that those thieves that were hanging upon the cross, when those fellows railed upon them, when they abused them, I believe they returned some very abusive language in their direction, and told them in no uncertain terms if I could get down from this cross. You know, things would be different. But Peter reminds us that we're not to render evil for evil.

But on the contrary, blessing, knowing that your calls are there, that you should inherit a blessing. Now, can a blessing come out of something as unnatural as letting someone abuse me with their tongue, and plan perhaps to do something that would hurt me, and I don't return that attack? But you know, what Paul says when he writes to the Romans, he says, You know, your enemy, if he hungers feed him. And he says, You know, all of those nice things that you do to him, it's like keeping coals afire from his head.

This is so unnatural for us to respond in the way that our Lord Jesus responded to this situation that he's found in. We say, But that's the Son of God. Peter says that's the example.

And the Word of God says that he wants us to be conformed more and more to the likeness, the image of the person of the Lord Jesus. We should be more Christ-like as a result of the fire of trial, the testing, everything that touches our lives. When he was reviled, he reviled not again.

When he suffered, he threatened not. He didn't say, I'll get you. He said, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. But he committed himself to him that judges righteously. I think that's the problem.

You see, what we want to do is take judgment into our own hands. And judgment is with God. God is really the only one that can exact judgment and do it righteously.

So often men, they err in their judgment. They make so many wrong judgments about things in this life. Are we able to say with confidence and assurance, as the Lord Jesus did, I will commit this matter into the hands of him that judges righteously? I'll let God be my vindicator.

And I won't assert myself, and I'll tell you why, brother and sister in Christ, I've seen Christians make fools out of themselves, because they could not restrain themselves. They didn't discipline themselves to react in a way that would bring glory to God. It matters sometimes that, indeed, the whole atmosphere was filled with what they speak of as flesh and fleshly activities, a response from the natural man that would defend himself and his rights, and not be able to adopt the right attitude toward grief, trial and testing in this life.

Now, Paul in Romans reminds us that if we would do one thing, we wouldn't have any problem in this area. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his own body, bears the penalty of our sins upon the cross. And in divine reckoning, when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, God reckons us to have died with him.

You see, we're alive unto God, but dead unto the world. That's what God wants to achieve in our lives, less and less of the response of the natural man to situations in this life. We are now new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new. I tell you, a life that is lived in complete commitment to God is like dynamite. It is so unlike what we see in the world today, when men are applauded for being able to hold their own in so many of these difficult situations in life.

Natural men in conflict with each other. As Christians, you wonder, how can I survive in a world that is at enmity with God? Well, the key to it, brother, is God's on our side, and greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. That's the key to it.

It's not how much I can assert myself. It's not how strong I am, how much influence I have, or any of those things. That's not for the glory of God.

Can I trust my God? Do I trust my God with this real life of mine? And look at this example, the one that gave us an example that is perfect, and said, God, by the grace that you provide, I'm going to adopt an attitude of Christ-likeness toward suffering, trial, and testing in this life. Lord, I'm not saying I like it, but give me the grace to keep from murmuring. And when suffering comes, and it's from an outside source, others would inflict hurt upon me.

Lord, help me to be like my Savior, who when he's reviled, he reviled not again. When he suffered, he threatened not. Let me have a Christ-like attitude toward suffering and trial in this life that others might be able to see.

Let it be a testimony for God, the one that truly can judge righteously. It's still a matter of being able to submit ourselves completely unto his care. Can he be trusted? Well, of course he can.

The one that saved our souls is going to take us all the way home to glory. I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. He's not going to let me down, even though I let him down.

And he'll never deny me, even though perhaps in the course of our lives we deny him many times. He is faithful. Let us appropriate and claim that faithfulness for our lives as believers in the Lord Jesus, that others may be able to take into account we have been with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think of the account in the book of Acts when Peter and John and the others, so often when they had been in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and all that radiant glory and beauty that had marked their lives because of his presence, others could take into account they'd been with Jesus Christ. They'd been with Jesus Christ. Do people ever detect that about us? Are they able to say with certainty, I know that man, that woman, they've been with Jesus Christ.

I've heard about Jesus Christ. Those people live like Jesus Christ would have them to live. They are good examples.

They are reflecting the glory and the image of the Son of God in their lives. That's a good testimony. That's a good witness.

God would have us to do that every day of our lives. It's not easy. It's one of the difficult things that we're faced with in Scripture.

It's one of those things that demands something of us. It involves unpleasantness. It involves sacrifice.

Paul says, "...present your bodies as a living sacrifice unto God." That's just your reasonable service. It's not a dead sacrifice, a living sacrifice. We may be called upon to die for our testimony as Christians, but we're prepared to live sacrificially for God and our Savior.

It will involve putting into practice some of the things that Peter has shared with us, the example of our Savior, the trial, the testing of this life like fire. It will purify, it will refine these lives of ours and make us more Christ-like. But we'll have to be willing and subjective to his will and his way.

Shall we pray? Our Father in Heaven, we bow in thy presence tonight and thank thee for the time spent together today in fellowship with thy dear people. We thank thee for thy holy word and for the one that he tells us of, your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For those moments spent around the table here in this room, remembering him.

O our God, those moments were filled with so much that moved our hearts and brought forth adoration and praise for the Lord Jesus. We thank thee for that opportunity, for this time of sharing, for this time spent over the word of God, for these reminders of what we can do with these lives of ours in a very positive way, that we can indeed be a testimony that brings glory and honor to the name of our Savior. Frankly, we pray to you that we shall be obedient to thy word and seek to bring glory and honor to the name of our Savior.

For this we ask in his lovely name. Amen.

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