

Good morning. I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to bring us this online platform so that we have some form of connection. If you have any feedback for us regarding this platform, we would be most appreciative. We are continuing our consideration of 1 Peter, and here in our text we find our first touch on the issue of trials that the Christian faces. Now one likes trials, but for the Christian there is something about trials that we all recognize, that's learn to commune with God with more earnestness and desire, and that God works through them such that we grow in our Christian life. I have said often, and hear it said, I wouldn't want to go through that trial again, but I would not give up what God did to me, or the communion I had with God during that time. Have you ever experienced that? Here is the thing about trials in the Christian life, they are the acid test of true life in Christ. I will try and expound on how Peter lays this out for us in the text, but basically trials for the Christian assess one fundamental reality, do I love Christ enough to walk through the trial before me? Several things are immediately present with that question. One thing present is that it underscores the emotion that motivates the Christian, and another it is that we are **led** through trials. Let's see how Peter presents this for us but let me give a brief synopsis of where we've been.

Verse 1 highlights Peter's authority, his purpose, and his recipients. We saw and made the connection with the original recipients and stated that Christians are elect exiles scattered throughout the world. Verse 2 highlights the work of the trinity in salvation. We were elect through the foreknowledge of God which we saw connected with mercy. We were Sanctified by the Holy Spirit for obedience to Christ Jesus and through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus for our sins. Verse 3 underscores the mercy of God in salvation. Verse 4 underscores the gift of God in salvation. Verse 5 underscores the promise of God in salvation.

Today I want to introduce our content by asking the question, **what are you willing to live through to enjoy what you love?** It is a question that has been the content of pop songs with catchy lyrics that basically say, I'll do whatever I have to do to experience your love. "Wild horses won't drag me away." "I'll walk 1000 miles to fall right at your door." "You're the light in my deepest darkest hour." I'm sure you have a score of songs that you could sing that have that sense. It's the question of every student trying to get through the class they absolutely despise, just so that they can graduate. It's the question of every medical student fretting over the medical rotation they knew was coming, that rotation that almost kept them from going to medical school. It's the question of parents who had the child they knew would be special needs, or who adopted a special needs child. **If you are human, at some point you will be challenged to go through hardship just to experience something you really want on the other side of the pain.** It's just part of life. In fact, it is so inherently human, that in order to be able to identify with us perfectly, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Son of God took humanity upon Himself for the sake of bringing salvation to all who repent of their sins and believe on Him, and the scriptures tell us that it was for the joy that was set before Him that endured the cross and despised the shame that it would bring. (Hebrews 12:2) How is this pertinent to our discussion? Well, Peter is going to sprinkle into his letter concepts about suffering, but not just normal hardships that come to us as human beings. Peter is going to underscore that the reason for the suffering is their identification with Christ. So as we go through this letter we need to ask ourselves the question are Jesus and Christianity worth the trials?

Matthew 16:24–25 (ESV): 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his **cross** and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Jesus says, Luke 21:17 (ESV): 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake.

How does Peter help us understand how to work through these kinds of things? Peter points out first of all that the causative emotion for knowing Jesus Christ is not sorrow, but great joy! **.I. Jesus is worth the hardship because the joy is inexpressible.** The word for translated "rejoice" here in our text, is a word that is only used in the Bible. It has the sense of being overjoyed, or being exceedingly joyful. The imagery that seems to best describe in my mind what we are reading here is the image of a baby when he or she can recognize a parent, and they act like they haven't seen them for weeks. There is an innocence to their joy that is unrestrained. Limbs flail around. Eyes are bright. Mouths our open. Its just joy. And what is the essence of that kind of joy? Peter calls us to consider what he has said and will say. "In this you rejoice." In what? Well, we rejoice in the fact that God has caused us to be born again to a living hope. We rejoice in the fact that the Christian has the surety of resurrection because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the fact it is not our power that will bring us into His presence and guard us until that day.

But our joy is not limited to a future experience. **.II. Jesus is worth the hardship because joy has a purpose.** Peter underscores another reason for this kind of joy, and that is that this joy stems from the knowledge that the pain we experience in this life for being a Christian has a purpose. He leads us there by underscoring that grief is real but we will see Jesus.

Peter says that right now, if necessary, we've been grieved by various trials. Notice here first that the Christian who lives with this kind of joy in God through Christ is still often found in places of grief. Grief is an appropriate response to the pains that we experience in this life. Christian joy for what God has done and will do because of Jesus Christ does not mean that we are to be impervious to pain. We are not numb to hardship. Grief was an emotion of which Jesus was well acquainted, as the prophet Isaiah tells us. We are in exile. This world system does not fit the mindset Christ is forming in the Christian, or the life Christ is preparing us for. While we are still here on earth, and not in heaven, we live surrounded by the evils of a broken world and sinful man. We struggle as well with our own brokenness. Here there is catastrophe, death, need, these are all very present realities throughout the world.

We have abundant joy in Christ, but we live with experiences of grief for the struggles that God has awakened us to see in this world.

Peter then connects this idea purpose for trials. Notice verse 7. "so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The trials serve as a means of proving whether or not we really are in Christ. There is one Greek word for the two words "tested genuineness." It is defined as "the process or means of determining the genuineness of something." (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [\*A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature\*](#) (3rd ed., p. 256). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.) Our faith is given the proverbial acid testing, not just to prove that we are in Christ, but to continue to refine us. So that the tested genuine as of your faith may found to praise and glory and honor.

The concept that readily comes to mind is the process of refining gold. There are several different methods that are used, but they all require a crucible. Gold is melted down to liquid. But then acids or electricity is introduced to induce the removal of other alloys. In the process the gold is refined. This is the idea for the Christian. This is why Christians are led through suffering. Christ is proving our faith to us, and refining us. Peter tells us that it leads to praise and glory and honor at the time of the revelation of Christ, or in other words, when Christ returns and consummates the age. But we can rejoice in what God is doing now in making us more like Christ. Are you rejoicing in that God is sanctifying you dear friend? Is Jesus worth it?

How is that joy seen? How is this commitment to Christ in the midst of trial seen? Peter goes on to highlight **.III. The paradox of Christian love.**

1 Peter 1:8–9 (ESV): 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

We have not seen Jesus. We do not see him now. Yet, in all this, we rejoice with a joy that is filled with glory, the consequence of which finds its end in the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls. There are several important questions that must be asked then. If they hadn't seen Jesus, and were not seeing Him then, how did they come to believe? Well, very simply, the testimony of the saints that had been with Jesus, along with the preaching of the gospel, had caused them to be born again to a living hope through the power of God. That is the framework that Jesus gives us. It is the same the world over for every Christian that did not live during that short period of time in which Jesus walked this earth. We heard the word of truth and God regenerated us. What are some of the means that He uses to arrest our minds? Well, one means is the eye testimony of Jesus' life and teaching compiled with the effects of that life and teaching upon the world. I don't have to see Jesus to believe that He is real, and that Christianity is real. There is enough testimony to that end. It is much like us with this corona virus. Very few people have actually seen the virus in a microscope. Those that have seen it have also been able to outline the dangers that this virus poses to us since it is a novel virus. But just because I have never seen the virus under a microscope, and do not have the means through which I can even think to try to see it in person, I can trust the testimony of those that have, along with the very real issue of deaths the world over, and along with a pause in activities the world over. It is the same with Christianity. We can look at the evidence both in scripture and in the very existence of Christianity, and know that it is true. If it were not true, the sheer volume of persecution over the centuries for being a Christian would have killed any desire to be a Christian.

Dear Christian, you do not have to be afraid of what God will do in you through the trials that we all face. They have purpose for the Christian. They result in joy, though now may be a time of grief. Further, we are part of a body. We can bear one

another's burdens, but we need to know what those burdens are in order to best help one another. If you are so isolated from God's people that no one will know what your needs are, you are bringing unnecessary trial upon yourself.

If you are not a Christian and are watching our broadcast may I ask you where you find your joy? If it is in the things that are sung about in love songs, or experienced in family, I have to tell you that you are selling yourself short. No one can give us joy with eternal anticipation except for Jesus Christ. Believe what Christ says about Himself, that He is the way, the truth, and the life. Believe what He says when He says that no one comes to the Father but by Him. Believe Him when He says that He has come to give abundant life, eternal life. Believe Him when He promises to forgive you of all of your sins, and so you can go to Him and repent. He has given His life a ransom for many. Will you trust in Him today and see your life filled with joy that can grieve and hope all at the same time!

Amen.