

1 Peter Chapter 1 v 1 - 12

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[0 : 00] Faith. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, exiles, scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with his blood.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth, into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him, and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[1 : 48] Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who've preached the gospel to you, by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Even angels long to look into these things. Amen. So we're in 1 Peter and chapter 1.

In one of the Christianity Explored videos that was produced by Rico Tice, he tells of what happened to him as a young man when he went to university and he signed up for the university rugby team.

He was a very keen rugby player. Still is. Well, not much a player, but still keen on rugby. And the coach of the team called them at the end of the term and he said to them, right, here are a list, a regime of exercises and things that you should be doing and preparing yourself for the season, the rugby season, which starts when we get back next term.

[3 : 17] And these instructions, I need to be carefully followed. Rico Tice admits that he simply took them and threw them in the bin and thought, I'll do a couple of press-ups, a couple of sit-ups, and I'll be fine for the season.

At the very first training session next term, all the team were a little bit apprehensive because they were to undergo tests to see that level of stamina and strength and fitness they were at.

And one of those tests was the bleep test, which is a running between two particular, two points, maybe 50 or 60 yards apart, and the time got shorter that you had to run between them, so you had to run faster and faster.

Rico Tice failed dismally those tests. In fact, he admits that it only took about two or three runs of the length that he was violently sick. But he wasn't the only one.

In fact, most of the team were pretty pathetic. Well, said the coach, we've all been exposed and shown what we're really like.

[4 : 26] But at least we found it out on the training ground before the real test comes when we play a match. Now this morning I talked a little bit about exercise.

And particularly those exercises that the Lord Jesus, I believe, gives to us as he gave to his disciples to cause our faith to grow, to cause our faith to become fit and healthy and strong, to prepare us particularly, if I'm going to this way, for the real tests, the most striking tests that life will bring our way.

And for the Christians to whom Peter is writing, those tests were very striking and very real. And he speaks about them there as sufferings and trials.

Verse 6, he says, in all this, that's the salvation that we have promised for us in Christ. We greatly rejoice, though now, for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

trials. Suffering is part of life. These trials come our way. And indeed, throughout the New Testament, not just only here, but elsewhere, the writers often pick up upon and speak to the disciples and the believers about trials.

[5 : 54] James famously, in his first chapter, verse 2, consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.

Apostle Paul, who was a man who knew a lot about trials and suffering and pain, speaks about them in Romans chapter 5, verse 3. He says, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and not only so, we also rejoice in our sufferings.

So Paul, James, other places too, the book of Hebrews, and so on, and here, of course, in 1 Peter. But there's something else that is in common with each one of those writers.

Not only the reality of pain and suffering and trials and difficulty, but you notice as well, the common denominator as well was joy or rejoicing. Peter says here, in all this you greatly rejoice.

James says, consider it pure joy, Paul remarks, we rejoice. Now we find this, if we're honest, very puzzling, don't we? One of the great quandaries of the Christian life is the problem of pain.

[7 : 03] C.S. Lewis wrote a very excellent book on the matter, dealing with this struggle of pain, and for the Christian particularly. And it's hard for us.

We get confused. How can these two seemingly contrary things, suffering, pain, and joy, and rejoicing be ever linked together?

Isn't it just a matter of sort of keeping going? Isn't it a matter of just about keeping our heads above water? how can we possibly be expected to praise in pain?

And to do so, I believe Peter helps the believers here, and us to understand, and to see our trials, our troubles, those real painful tests, to see them from a heavenly perspective, a heavenly viewpoint, rather than our own viewpoint.

We're down on ground level, as it were, and we need at times to rise up, spiritually speaking, and see them from the Lord's point of view.

[8 : 15] That's why when Paul writes again in 2 Corinthians, this time in chapter 4, he says, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, that is the experiences of our lives, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but that which is unseen is eternal. So how are we to view these trials and tests? We'll come on a little later on to see how they affect our faith for the good.

How are we to view them? How are we to view the painful experiences of life? How are we to understand them? Well, first of all, we're to view them as being real. Real.

You know, when you speak to somebody and they're going through a really difficult time, a painful time, and you say, you know, it must be really hard. No, no. No, it's fine. I'm doing well.

This isn't really difficult. It's not being honest, is it? It's not being truthful. It's trying to pretend to be something that we're not. We're not to think of these things as inconsequential or insignificant.

[9 : 23] The trials that you and I go through, dear friends, as believers, the suffering that we endure, the pain that we have is very real and God expects us to treat it as real because he does too.

If you've got the authorised version, you'll know that Peter, when he writes here, the authorised version translates suffer grief with the word as heaviness.

Heaviness. And the reality is that pain and trouble weighs us down. It can be crushing. It can feel like a huge burden and our legs aren't strong enough to bear it.

Our knees are knocking together. There's no shame in feeling grief.

There's no dishonour in shedding tears. We know our Lord Jesus did that on more on one occasion. The English stiff upper lip is a falsehood. It's actually hypocrisy, not courage.

[10 : 23] It's hiding our heads in the sand. It's pretending that everything's there. It was okay. And that isn't the place for believers. Ultimately, we are to be absolutely, frankly, honest before God.

And that's what we find refreshing, don't we, in the Scriptures. The psalmist who cries out, oh, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Poor Elijah, as he sits under the broom tree.

I've had enough. Please let me die. These people struggle with real difficulties. And these trials are real. And they're not just physical.

We're not just talking about those illnesses and diseases and those things that we battle with, particularly as we get older with our bones and our joints and all the other things that come along.

Of course, we know that these trials are of various kinds. Peter says here, you suffer grief in all kinds, manifold, various, all sorts of.

[11 : 31] And trials can be very emotional, mental, of course, spiritual, anything that weighs our hearts down, anything that causes us to grieve, our own battle with sin and temptation.

And the Christians to whom Peter is writing here were believers who suffered in very different ways to one another. If you read the letter, then you'll find out that some of them were slaves and their owners treated them badly and unfairly.

There were some who were married to non-Christians and there were real tensions and pressures within the family units. There were those who were being persecuted simply for living for Jesus, living righteous lives.

There were those who were having problems with unbelievers who were arguing with them because they wouldn't indulge in the sinful practices that they were doing, peer pressure upon them. Dear friends, when we face trials of these kinds and tests of these kinds, we need to get rid of that idea, oh, it's just in the mind.

It's a matter of your mind. It's a matter of your having a right attitude. It's not all in the mind. It's part of life. It's part of being in this world, this broken world, this corrupt world.

[12 : 54] And you and I, dear friends, will all of us at times, if not even all the time, suffer griefs and trials. So we're to realize that they are real.

We're to view them as heaven does, as real, but we're also to view them, Peter says here, as relative. In that sense, we need to view them in relation to two other things, two things which are even more real than our present sufferings and trials.

The first of them, of course, is eternity. Peter has been talking, and we read there, about our inheritance in heaven, which can never spoil or perish or fade.

He's been talking about us being shielded by God's power until that day when Jesus comes again and everything will be revealed. He's going on to talk about Jesus, our Savior, the joy we have in Him, looking forward to the end result of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

Dear friends, we are people not of time but of eternity. We're living in this time but this time is brief. It's short. It's a matter of just a few decades.

[14 : 08] That's why Peter writes here, in all this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while. He's not belittling their suffering. He's not belittling their trials.

He's saying, in light of eternity, what is a few years or even a few decades of suffering compared to eternity? These troubles are for a while.

even if we've suffered all our lives. And dear friends, even that compared to eternity is a little while.

Now Paul isn't, sorry, Peter isn't saying this to degrade or to undermine or to belittle their grief but he's showing us there are two reasons for us to hope and to rejoice even in the midst of these trials and struggles.

The first is that they have to come to an end. They can't go on for eternity. They won't go on for eternity. They can't go on forever. There is light at the end of the tunnel and that light at the end of the tunnel isn't the train coming towards us.

[15 : 22] It's the end, the way out. Paul, as I've mentioned before, was a man who knew such terrible trials and suffering, physical and emotionally he talks about being beaten and being stoned and being shipwrecked and being hungry, starving, but then he also says and what's more is the burden I bear for the churches.

His concern and care for God's people weighed heavier on his heart than all the physical sufferings he went through but he says this in 2 Corinthians 4, 17 he calls them light and momentary troubles.

How can shipwreck and hunger and beatings and stonings and all these things because they must come to an end. Whatever dear friends you and I are going through it must come to an end.

And secondly of course is this we realize that our light and momentary troubles can never take away our salvation. They can never take away what we already have in Christ.

That's why Paul says in this you greatly rejoice. in what? Well look at what he's been saying. God's great mercy that's given us new birth and a living hope an inheritance never perish spoil or fade a inheritance kept in heaven us that are shielded by God's power until the coming revelation and salvation.

[16 : 45] What you have in Christ is yours dear friends by God's grace and it shall never be taken away. If you are Christ you are his. If you are born again of his spirit then you can never be unborn again of the spirit.

If your citizenship is in heaven then you shall surely get to heaven. No matter what the future brings no matter what the present trials but Peter especially wants the believers not only to lift their eyes up as it were and look to heaven and the future blessings he wants them to see that there are real present blessings real present reasons for them to rejoice now even in these trials.

Not only because our trials need to be viewed in relation to eternity but because our trials need to be viewed in relation to our faith.

This is where we come back to what we were thinking about particularly this morning. Our faith verse 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith faith that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ is supremely precious to us because it is through that faith that we have received salvation.

salvation. There is no other way is there to be saved except to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way for our sins to be forgiven apart from faith in the one who died for us upon the cross.

[18 : 17] There is no other way that we can become children of God except through faith in receiving Jesus as our saviour. Faith gives us peace with God now. Faith is what brings about the imparting of the Holy Spirit to our hearts.

faith is more precious than anything else on earth. If we possess faith then we have every treasure in heavenly places because our faith is in Christ the giver of these things.

And so whatever we lose in that sense through our trials whatever we go without whatever heartache we feel faith is the vital thing.

That's why Peter speaks here of faith being like gold. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold.

All that gold can buy is for a moment. All that gold or riches or money is perishable passing temporary.

[19 : 31] It can give a little bit of a fix. It can be like a hit that somebody might have who's a drug addict but it can't bring lasting peace. It can never bring joy and happiness. It can never sustain.

It's quickly gone. Even those who millionaires, billionaires, multi-millionaires all that they have they can't take with them. And all that they have can't relieve them of the sorrows and the griefs and the pains of life do they?

In fact if we're honest when we see people who are rich and famous and so on it seems that their lives are full of sadness and disappointment. People only count them of any worth because of the money that they have.

But the currency of faith secures us every spiritual and heavenly blessing. And with that comes joy unspeakable.

There in verse 8 though you've not seen him you love him. How do we love Jesus? We love him by faith. And even though you do not see him now you believe in him, faith in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

[20 : 41] those of us who are believers, dear friends, think of those occasions, think of those times when we have known the nearness of the Lord Jesus in such a wonderful way when he's drawn close and spoken to us or comforted us or helped us or whatever it may be and the joy that's filled your soul.

Would you exchange that for anything else? Would you exchange it for all the money in the world? Would you exchange it for all the riches, for all the power? no way to have the nearness of Christ, to know the delight of his presence.

There's nothing to compare, is there? And that's just a tiny, tiny grain, isn't it, compared to all the riches that we've yet to have and yet to enjoy, not only in this life but particularly in eternity.

And they all come through faith. so ultimately Peter wants us, that's just James, that's just Paul, that's just the whole of the New Testament, want us to see that our trials ultimately are rewarding.

Rewarding. Notice how he says there, and we've picked it up before, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief.

[22 : 10] Had to. Had to. Well we have to suffer grief because we live in a sinful world and we are sinful and fallen people. But there's something else beyond that.

The Greek, in a sense, speaks of being necessary. And we have two needs, dear friends, as Christians. Two absolutely essential needs.

We've picked on them already but one of them we need to elaborate on and that is we must have true faith. Real faith, saving faith. That's why Peter speaks here of proven, genuine faith.

There's false faith, isn't there? Every single person alive in the world is a person of faith. Whether they're religious or not, atheist or not, everybody believes in something even if ultimately they believe in themselves.

When science or technology or whatever it may be, they have faith. But true faith is the only faith which saves, the only faith which lasts, the only faith which actually brings and produces something worth believing in.

[23 : 25] and so he says, even though it's of greater worth even than gold which perishes, they're refined by fire. our trials put faith to the test to see if our faith is genuine and real.

Do you remember that parable that Jesus taught about the different types of soil and he said some of the seed fell upon the pathway which was hard and the birds of the air stole it away. But then he spoke about some of the seed that fell upon rocky soil and it began to spring up.

It began to show signs of life but because it had no root it withered away. All of us have known the sadness and the sorrow of people who have given the impression of being believers, of receiving the good news of Jesus' love and they seem to be showing signs of interest or concern about spiritual things and then suddenly a trial comes, a test comes, a difficulty comes, somebody opposes them or something goes wrong and they say, well where is God now?

That faith that seemed to be so positive is blown away by the wind. Dear friends, have you got true and saving faith or simply faith for the good times, faith for the good news, faith on the sunny day, when we pass through a very painful test and our faith though may be shaken and knocked still rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ and we have genuine reason to believe that that faith is genuine, that we really are the Lord's.

But as we thought this morning, imperative as it is that we have true faith, saving faith, it's imperative we have a refined faith, a pure faith, slightly different analogy to what I was saying this morning about faith that's growing but faith that is ongoing as it were being refined and purified, faith that becomes stronger.

[25 : 44] goldsmiths purify gold by removing or burning off the impurities that spoil it.

The heat separates the gold from the other metals or minerals in the ore. The end result is a pure gold, a much more valuable gold.

gold. Our trials and our tests are times when the heat is turned up to make the impurities as it were in our lives and our hearts rise to the surface and be seen.

Isn't that the real test? When things are hard and tough, what do we do? Do we blame God? Do we get angry with God? Do we curse God?

Remember Job, his wife says to him after the trials, well why didn't you just curse God? He said, how can I? How can I possibly do such a thing? There was a purifying going on.

[26 : 46] Our sinful attitudes bubble to the surface, our selfishness, our thoughtlessness, our pride. And when they bubble to the surface, that's because the Holy Spirit is revealing to us that they need to be taken away.

They need to be removed to produce a stronger faith, a purer faith, a more valuable faith. Faith by which we can enjoy more of the blessings that only come through faith.

What's the end result? The end result is clarity concerning our salvation. salvation. Isn't it strange that Peter talks about faith and he talks about trials and he talks about the blessings and so on and then he goes from there to verse eight, speaking about Jesus.

Jesus. The purer our faith, the greater our faith, the more lovely Jesus becomes to us.

The more wonderful in our sight he appears. The more amazing his love for us. It's as if somehow in the clearing away of the slag as it were in our hearts and lives and the clearing away of those sinful attitudes and desires.

[28 : 18] In one sense in the polishing of our faith so we see more clearly the Lord Jesus. We see him more wonderful and more glorious. We know greater joy in him and we have our hearts set upon that coming day.

The culmination, the climax, the great event of all history when he will return and we receive the end result of our faith, the salvation of our souls. It's coming.

Whatever's going on in our lives nothing can stop the coming of the Lord Jesus. Nothing can stop that day when we reach glory. We can't see it yet. We can't taste it yet.

That's because we're not ready yet. But dear friends what's happening is day by day we're crossing off the dates on the calendar towards that spectacular day.

We're one day closer to glory. We're one day closer to the result, the end result and goal of our salvation. And when it comes in that last day what a day it will be.

[29 : 29] Again Paul reminds the believers in Romans 13 our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. That's our hope, our confidence. That's what sustains us. Philippians in chapter 1 verse 6 Paul says we're confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

What is your faith in? What is it your faith is straining towards? What is it your faith is holding on to for the future?

I close with these words from 1 John in chapter 3. Dear friends, now, today, in whatever circumstances we are, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him. for we shall see him as he is. And notice this, all who have this hope in him purify themselves just as he is pure.

one, after seeing about him. you see that