

SUBJECT: WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

SCRIPTURE: 1 Pet. 1:6-9

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Introduction:

2,500 years ago Solomon surveyed the course of human existence and concluded that life is all vanity, or emptiness - Eccl. 2:18-23. He saw the righteous suffer and felt that it was a form of injustice. Job must have felt much this way during his time of trial. Perhaps you too have gone through an extended trial and had questions and doubts about it.

There will be trials that come our way. We may not understand them all, nor appreciate them when they come, but we need to be prepared for them just the same. That is Peter's purpose in these verses. He wants to encourage his readers, but he also wants to prepare them for what is surely to come. Tonight, let's see what Peter's words can teach us about our trials and why Christians suffer. He gives us three words that we need to keep in mind about our trying times.

I. A WORD ABOUT REALITY (6)

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:"

1. Rejoicing Is Our Common State - If you spend enough time around some believers, you may come away feeling that the Christian life is one big series of trials and that there is no room for praise. In truth, we are to be a rejoicing people. We are to rejoice in spite of our troubles.
2. Redemption Does Not Guarantee Us Immunity From Trials - The Christian who thinks that just because he/she is saved that they are going to be shielded from trouble is in for a terribly rude awakening! Being saved is no hedge from trouble! Christians get sick! Christian marriages fall apart. Christian parents have trouble with their children. Christians have financial troubles. Christians walk through some pretty deep, dark valleys. Jesus said it as plain as it could have been said - John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
 - Amplify. Remember, that just because this trial came and took you by surprise and jerked the rug out from under your feet. It never took God by surprise! He knew about it before it happened and had already made a way to bring you out of that trial. He never changes and is still able to help you through - Heb. 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."
3. Rough Times Are In Store For Everyone - No one is immune from troubles and trials! The struggles of Job. His life was going well, he was blessed, had a large family and was right with God, but his life fell apart! Do not fall into the trap of the health and wealth preacher who tells you that if you are saved you will never have trouble again. He is lying to you. God wants you to know that there will be times when you will have battles!
 - Amplify. Peter calls these trying times "manifold temptations." This means that they hit us from every side and with often devastating consequences.

II. A WORD ABOUT REALIGNMENT (7)

"The genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The Area Of Our Trials - "The trial of your faith." When troubles do come, they seem to concentrate their power against our faith in the Lord. Satan wants to do all that he can to make Christians doubt the power of God to meet their need.

- a. If anyone knew this, it was Peter. Jesus had already told him that he was going to die for Christ, (Ill. John 21:18-19) that he could expect rejection from the world, and Peter had already suffered for his faith - Acts 4 and 12.
 - Amplify. Paul knew his share of suffering, Stephen suffered for Jesus, James was killed for his faith, Acts 12; over 68 million believers have died during the last 2,000 years for the name of Jesus. Christians who find themselves suffering, especially for the faith, are in good company.
1. The Alignment That Takes Place - Peter speaks of the refining process that gold goes through. When it is subjected to the flame, the impurities and dross in the gold come to the top. The result is far purer gold than that which was present before!
 - a. The same is true in the life of the believer, when Jesus allows us to go through the furnace of affliction, it serves to remove from our lives things that were not needed and it brings into a closer and purer relationship with the Lord Jesus.
 2. The Abundance We Receive - Peter nudges us to remember that we aren't home yet! Our trials are working for our good - Ill. Rom. 8:28. We may not see the benefit today, but when we stand before the Lord in Heaven, and we are rewarded for our walk with Him and for the sufferings we endured below, it will be worth it all them - 2 Cor. 4:17.
 - Illustrate. The young eagle - When it is time to leave the nest, the mother will literally throw the infant from the nest. As he plummets to earth vainly attempting to fly, he fears sure and certain death. At the last moment, his mother swoops down from above and catches him and carries him back to the safety of the nest. This is repeated several times over the next few days. Finally, the little eaglet will spread his wings and soar upward. Eventually, he will be able to fly above all the storms below, but only because he endured the fear of falling. Just like that mother eagle, God knows best. He will not let you crash and burn. He just allows what He does to strengthen your faith and to grow you up in Him. Let's face it, if the Lord never challenged us, we would never grow!

III. A WORD ABOUT RELIABILITY (8)

(Not that God can count on us, but that we can count on Him!)

- (Ill. As we weather the storms of life and see God come through time and again, we can actually learn to develop a spirit of praise as we journey toward Heaven. We will find that our unseen Savior will see us through every trial! Just like the shepherd in Psa. 23, He ever abides with his own. When we face trials, He goes through them with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us - Heb. 13:5; His grace is always sufficient for every need -

2 Cor. 12:9. This ought to cause us to be filled with that unspeakable joy of verse 8!)

Conclusion:

Either someone is in a difficult place now, or some of us are about to go into one. Whatever the reason, I am glad for this Book that gives us hope regarding the overcoming of life's difficult times. Do you need something from Jesus? If so, this altar is open and Jesus is waiting and willing to help you and see that your need is met.