

## The Needed Trial

Text: I Peter 1:1-9

In John 21, Jesus was about to ascend back to heaven. He recommissions Peter back into service by giving him the threefold command to love Him and feed His sheep. But just before Christ ascends He tells Peter of the death he was going to die when he is old. John 21:18, 19, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." Literally, Peter is going to have to take his cross and go to his death for the Lord Jesus. History outside the Bible tells us that Peter was informed that he was to be crucified. And upon being informed he said he was not worthy to die as his Lord and requested that he might be crucified upside down and he was. According to I Corinthians 9:5, we understand that Peter's wife kept company with him. History also records that his wife was crucified at the same time.

As the great apostle sees his prophesy of approaching martyrdom, we observe in his first epistle that suffering is an outstanding theme. I love it when the mighty apostles take the voice of a pastor as Peter does in this passage. Peter becomes vicarious, as if to say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Trials always have a reason. Attitude determines our altitude. Let me explain. Look at life as atmospheric. If we have a sour and dour attitude, we live in the dark, despondent lowlands, not unlike those areas likened to John Bunyan's Slough of Despond. The more faith-filled our attitude, the higher our altitude. This will place us in the area the song writer was referring to when he wrote, "I'm pressing on the upward way; new heights I'm gaining every day; still praying as I onward bound, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on Canaan's tableland; A higher plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

In I Peter 1:6b, Peter tells the flock of trials that will be taking place "...if need be...." God will only bring what is needed. There are five important truths that Peter would like us to understand that will help us appreciate the trials that God either brings or allows to come our ways.

### 1. TRIALS ARE TEMPORARY.

I Peter 1:6b: "...though now for a season...."

My dad used to say one of the most oft used phrases in the Bible is the phrase, "...it came to pass...." In the Authorized Version that phrase is mentioned no less than 453 times. Thank God, whatever you are going through, it did not come to stay. Now that may seem trivial to you, but think about it - trials can be so much easier to bear up under if we realize they have their term limits!

I love Asher! I think I might love Asher the son of Jacob more since I have a grandson named Asher. His name means Happy. I think in many ways we often have a tendency to live up to our names. Deuteronomy 33:25 says this of

the tribe of Asher: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” What this verse is saying is, even as God gave the children of Israel shoes that could last for forty years in the wilderness, I will give you strength for each and every day that I shall give you in your life. After all, this is the promise of God, as He taught us to pray in Luke 11:3, “Give us day by day our daily bread.” Paul tells us again in II Corinthians 4:16, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” Let us therefore claim God’s power day by day until the trial passes by. Psalm 30:5: “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

## 2. TRIALS ARE UNINVITED GRIEF.

I Peter 1:6b: “...ye are in heaviness....”

A true trial is not something we would have chosen for ourselves. Although trials are uninvited grief, our Lord understands the heaviness that comes in our trials and He who took our sins and exchanges our unrighteousness for His righteousness, also offers us another exchange. Christ offers us an invitation in Matthew 11:28-30: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

## 3. TRIALS ARE PLURAL IN NATURE.

I Peter 1:6c: “...through manifold temptations....”

Temptations or trials never come by themselves; they most often come in groups. The third stanza of “Amazing Grace” comes to mind, “Through many dangers, toils and snares we have already come. T’was grace that brought us safe thus far, And grace will lead us home.”

Notice the progression of trials in Job’s life evidenced by these phrases:

Job 1:16: “While he was yet speaking, there came also another....”

Job 1:17: “While he was yet speaking, there came also another....”

Job 1:18: “While he was yet speaking, there came also another....”

Job lost his livestock, his servants and finally all his children, one after another. This is the nature of trials. Again, what will help carry you through trials is the knowledge that they will not last forever. When trials seem to be multiplying, here is a glimpse into forever that should encourage you: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

## 4. TRIALS ARE A HIDDEN ALCHEMY OF FAITH.

I Peter 1:7a: “...that the trial of your faith....”

God allows our faith to be placed on trial so that we might be strengthened in that very area. The etymology of “alchemy” is the medieval forerunner of “chemistry,” based on the supposed transformation of matter. It was concerned particularly with attempts to convert base metals into gold. Paul was familiar with

the Panhellenic games of ancient Greece specifically, the Isthmian games which were held both the year before and the year after the Olympic games in Corinth. Using the language of that day he compared it to the discipline of the Christian life thusly, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (I Corinthians 9:24, 25). Our athletes who endure years of training and trials may receive the gold in Olympic games. The Bible challenges all to "go for the gold" when it speaks of the patience of Job in James 5:11: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Job, by faith, said in Job 23:10, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

#### 5. TRIALS ARE THE PATHS BEYOND THE GOLDEN DREAM.

I Peter 1:7b: "...more precious than of gold...."

Peter went on to say that the trial produces something in us that ultimately is more precious than gold. It is the purification process that brings forth Christ-likeness. Psalm 66:10 says, "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried." In the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant was overlaid with pure gold and the mercy seat was made of pure gold (Exodus 25:11, 17). The New Jerusalem is walled in jasper with twelve gates of one gigantic pearl each. Amazingly, beyond the walls and gates, the city and the street are pure gold! The gold is so pure, it is like transparent glass (Revelation 21:18, 21). In the Bible, gold is a symbol of Deity. It was the blood upon the mercy seat that symbolized our eternal redemption provided by Christ. We have Heaven itself, a golden street, a golden mansion - all because of Jesus (I Peter 1:18, 19)! No wonder Peter said in the next chapter, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious..." (I Peter 2:7). It will be worth it all when we see Jesus! He is better than gold!

-Pastor Pope-