

Armagh Baptist Church Bible Studies
Wednesday 20th January 2010 – 8:00pm
1 Peter 1:6-7 – ‘Teaching on Trials’

Introduction

So far in 1 Peter ch.1 we have learned that:

1. We've been born again for glory (v.3) – (cf John 3:3)
2. We are being kept for glory (v.5) – (cf Jude 24-25)

Tonight as we look at vs.6&7 we will learn that:

3. We are being prepared for glory (vs.6-7)

This is not so easy – in fact, it is often painful and difficult.

What we are talking about here is Sanctification.

Sanctification – is the process of being made more and more holy;

It's the process of being made more and more like Jesus.

This happens through:

- Spending time with Jesus in prayer
- Feeding upon His Word and applying it to our lives
- The refining process of the trials of life and how we respond to them.

This we don't like – It is often painful – But it is necessary!

James says in James 1:2-4

‘Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials of many kinds!’

How come?

‘Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.’

Is that how you feel whenever you face hard times? Full of pure joy?

We can only be full of joy in the face of trials if we understand why God allows such trials to come into our lives – they are part of the maturing process, to make us spiritually more and more like Christ – to sanctify us.

But before we get into talking about hard times, Peter puts in a phrase to remind us of the good times. Notice...

1. The Source of Great Joy (v.6)

‘In this you greatly rejoice...’

What does this refer to? In what do we greatly rejoice?

Answer: In all the blessings that come from the New Birth in vs.3-5.

- **New Birth (v.3)** - an undeserved fresh start in life, by God's mercy.
 - **Living Hope (v.3)** – because of Christ's resurrection we are sure that we too will be raised after death and live forever with Him.
 - **Eternal Inheritance (v.4)** – Kept in heaven for us – Just waiting for us!
- It can never perish, spoil or fade!

- **Secure Salvation (v.5)** – God's power is keeping us for heaven, just as much as heaven is being kept for us!

So, *‘In all this we greatly rejoice!’* Our salvation should be a source of great joy to us whatever we are passing through.

Joy is a deep seated experience that stays constant whatever our outward circumstances might be. Our *happiness* can fluctuate; our **joy** shouldn't.

2. The Sorrow and Grief of Trials (v.6b)

Though our salvation brings us great joy, we still face sorrow and grief in suffering and trials - even as Christians. True Christians don't always have permanent cheesy grins on their faces! Sometimes we are swept off our feet by the severest trials that quickly wipe the smile from our faces, but they shouldn't wipe the peace or the joy of salvation from our hearts.

Notice:

(i) The Great Contrasts in the Christian Life:

- Mountain-tops of Joy
- Valleys of Trouble

Both are the real experiences of True Christians.

The Christian Life is not always a mountain-top experience.

There are Valleys to contend with too.

I'm sure many of you have heard this poem before (Author Unknown):

*My life is but a weaving
between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colors,
He worketh steadily.
Oft times He weaveth sorrow,
And I, in foolish pride,
Forget He sees the upper,
And I the under-side.*

*Not 'til the loom is silent
and the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
and explain the reason why...
The dark threads are as needful
in the Weaver's skilful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
in the pattern He has planned.
He knows, He loves, He cares,
nothing this truth can dim.
He gives His very best to those
who leave the choice with Him.*

So we have been reminded of the Great Contrasts in the Christian life. Next

(ii) The Great Variety of Trials that can come:

'In all kinds of trials' (v.6)

Trials in the Christian life can take many forms: It could be your own ill-health, or the loss of a loved one. It could be that you have to contend with rebellious children, an unhappy marriage, injustices, persecutions, injuries? My trial might not be your trial, but if it's a trial to you then it's real, and ought not to be trivialised by somebody else who has not had to face what you're facing. Trials come in all sorts of shapes and sizes.

(iii) The Real Suffering and Grief Trials can cause.

'You have had to suffer grief' (v.6)

'Grief' cf Matt 26:37 – Jesus in Gethsemane.

cf 1 Thess 4:13 – believers losing loved ones.

Jesus knows what it is to grieve. Peter witnessed that for himself first-hand. Paul also knew what grief for believers was like: facing the death of a loved one or other major trials.

Christians are human; they can and indeed must grieve, just like anybody else, or there will be real problems later on.

(iii) The Temporary Nature of Trials.

'Though now for a little while...'

No trial is forever. They are temporary.

It may feel like a valley, but that means there is a mountain-top near-by! What's more, for us as Christians we believe that God controls our trials. It may be Satan testing us and sending bad things into our lives, but the Lord only allows him to go so far and no further (1 Cor 10:13) (Job 1:6-12, 2:9-10). The devil may try to harm us; but God has a firm hold on his chain. As Warren Wiersbe says:

*'When God permits his children to go through the furnace,
He keeps his eye on the clock, and his hand on the thermostat.'*

In other words, God controls both the timing and the intensity of the trial.

3. The Sovereign Purpose of these Trials (v.7)

- **To Prove the Genuineness of our faith**
i.e. Gold refined in the fire as opposed to fool's gold.
Have we got real faith at all? (cf Matt 13:1-9, 18-23)
'A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted.'
- **To Refine and Strengthen our faith**
Job 23:10. If it's real, then it will grow through the testing, not fail.

- **To Result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus is revealed**
We will bring praise glory and honour to Jesus then, if we prove faithful in trials now. And He will give praise and glory to us as well if we are faithful to him through whatever trials we face (See 2 Cor 4:7-9, 16-18).

Conclusion

There is an old chorus that goes something like this:

*'It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ,
One look on His dear face, all sorrow will erase,
It will be worth it all, when we see the Lord.'*

We don't know a lot about heaven and what it will be like, but we do know this much: Revelation 21:4

*'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,
For the old order of things has passed away.'*

So that's how you can 'consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds' as a Christian. God's got a purpose behind it all – to make you more and more like Christ, and one day to crown you with glory in his presence – where there will be no more tears – forever!

© Ian Grant