

Salvation, Joy and Trials

1 Peter 1:1–9

Writing to a group of Christians scattered and persecuted outside of Jerusalem in a place called Asia Minor, Peter sought to comfort them and to remind them that they have a solid hope because of their salvation. He also encouraged and challenged them as royal priests of God to maintain the highest standards of holy living as their means of witness to their persecutors because it is through persecution of their faith that their faith will be strengthened and their joy increased and ultimately bringing glory to God. They need to see that God's incorruptible salvation is the source of Christian joy in the midst of trials.

Like the first century believers, we ask, "How are we to make sense of our trials?" In these three verses, Peter gives us three principles to keep to our hearts.

1. Christians need to _____ the _____ of trials and suffering

Trials come into our lives. We are not immune to it. This is what this letter is about (1 Pet. 1:6; 2:19-21, 3:9, 13-14, 4:12-13, 19). Trials and suffering for Christians are common (Job 5:7). Jesus did not only say that "*In the world you have tribulation*" (John 16:33, cf. Matt. 5:10-11). He Himself experienced it (Hebrews 5:8). If our Lord Himself suffered, we should expect the same (2 Tim 3:12, cf. Acts 14:22). Trials and persecution are part of the Christian life (Phil 1:29, cf. Col. 1:24). Our trials today may be different (i.e. Peter uses the term "various trials" to mean many colored (all sorts or all kinds). But whatever kind of trial we go through, Peter says that they are grievous (to be distressed to be afflicted not only with physical pain but also mental anguish, including sadness, and sorrow and discouragement).

2. Christians need to _____ the _____ of their trials

Trials come simply to refine our faith. Faith is at the very heart of the Christian life (Heb. 11:6). Our faith is precious. Hence Peter contrasts and compares faith with gold. Faith is more precious than gold because gold is perishable, but faith is not. Peter compares faith with gold in that both are refined by fire ("proof" and "tested"). God tests our faith to reveal its genuineness, not for His sake but for our sake (Job 23:10). Genuine faith will not fail (Mark 4:5-6, 16-17) but grow stronger, not weaker, through trials (James 1:2-4).

We should see trials as *temporary* (Rom. 8:18) and *tempered* (2 Cor. 4:17); *necessary*, and *under God's control* (Eph. 1:11; Rev. 6:9-11). Endurance during trials are rewarded when Christ returns. We participate in God's praise (1 Cor. 4:5; Matt. 25:21, 23), glory (Rom. 2:7, 10; Col. 3:4), and honor (Rom. 2:7, 10; 2 Tim. 4:8).

3. Christians need to _____ what is _____ to handle their trials

Trials should cause us to look to God and affirm our faith in the Lord Jesus (1 Pet 1:8) believing the promise of His presence (Heb. 13:5, Matt. 28:20). We are to acknowledge our hope that He is coming back (1 Pet. 1:7, cf. 5, 13; 4:13; 5:1) and we abound in our love to our Savior (1 Pet. 1:8). Love for Jesus Christ in response to His ultimate love for us as seen in the cross, is the central motivation for the Christian life. Our hearts need to be filled with love for Jesus Christ if we are going to love Him and others.
