

THE CRUCIBLE
OF TRIALS
(1 Peter 1:6-7)
10/30/2011

INTRO. For quite some time I have been contemplating speaking on the trials of the Christian life. On my heart was the subject of 1 Peter 1:6-7 (read 3-7). I thought I had spoken on these verses not so long ago, but found it was 13 years ago. At that I did two messages on this subject, and in going over that I found that when I was doing those messages a young Jewish lady sent us a note at Christmas. Her husband had been in Bible school where I taught some years before that. Her name was Shauna MacIntosh. And that Christmas, over 13 years ago she sent us a letter saying that they were excited to see what the Lord had next for them in life. Well, little did she know that the next change of events would be to find her husband dead underneath their car. I expect he was working on it. That left Shauna as a young widow with four children.

When I view life in this present world, all around me I see pain and trials and troubles and sin and sickness and sorrows. It is true that life is not all trials. There are some true joyous occasions along the way of the Christian's journey, but trials seem to be a very big part of it. Just in this past while, in a very short time my wife and I found ourselves in the darkest valley. The strains of what I face sometimes wants to eat into our lives and my wife bears the brunt of a lot of it. I appreciate your goodness to us during pastor appreciation month. Thank you, each one of you. Sometimes I just don't know how to properly express a thank you to so many of you. But may I encourage you, in it all, remember the pastor's wife.

I have lived a few years already, at least enough to observe some facts of life. One of those is that life is made up of a considerable amount of grief and sorrow and trials and troubles. And second, I have come to the conclusion that though I do not see how, nor understand much of the ways of God, I know that God is good, and I am well convinced that all things do work together for good to those who love God.

And so, with regard to our text, I am not speaking on the first part of verse 6, which is the main clause to both verses. But let me briefly note this main clause. Peter

says, "In this you greatly rejoice..." When he says, 'In this...' he is speaking of rejoicing in our salvation. It is in verse 5 that we find that 'In this' refers to our salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time.

But after this main clause, the rest of these two verses is prefaced with the preposition 'though'. This word expresses a concession. But it also introduces a fact, and that fact is the fact of trials in this present life. And those trials is the subject of our message this morning.

I. THE FACT OF TRIALS

So, Peter writes, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials..." The word *though* has introduced us to a fact, and it is a contrasting fact to that of the believer's rejoicing in his salvation. The contrast to that rejoicing is the fact of having been grieved by various trials. But let us look at these verses piece by piece. What is revealed to us first is the time of these trials; when they are and for how long they will continue.

A. The time of these trials

1. Now

Note first that the time of these trials is *now*. There is no doubt that you and I are no exception to this fact of trials. But it is comforting that they are only now, and before us lies a salvation ready to be revealed. Then these trials will be over. The trials of life are now, in this present life. Tomorrow they will be over. We sing the song, "Some glad morning when this life is o're I'll fly away." It is a word of encouragement to know that these trials are only "now."

But, "There is coming a day when no heart-aches shall come, No more clouds in the sky, no more tears to dim the eye. There'll be no sorrow there, no more burdens to bear, No more sickness no pain, no more parting over there; And forever I will be with the One who died for me, What a day, glorious day, that will be." You see, these trials are only now. Soon they will be over.

Of those OT saints listed in Hebrews 11, it says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Their trials were 'now'. And now they are past.

2. For a little while

Second, let us note for how long these trials will be. For this, notice that our text says, "...though now, for a *little while*..." I want you to think big with me this morning. Let us say you could take a roll of paper and roll it out around our own galaxy, the Milky Way. This galaxy is about 100,000 light years in diameter. That is about 314,000 light years in circumference. One light year is six trillion miles. And let us say you could make a line with a pencil all the way around on that paper that goes around the Milky Way. Now take a pencil and make one dot on that line. Let us say the line represents eternity, which it does not because eternity cannot be measured. But let us say it does, and let us say the dot represents the entire length of the given time of life of 70 years. Now that line represents eternity with God and that dot represents the time of your trials on earth. There you have a little idea what is meant by 'now', or 'for a little while'.

You see, this life with its trials is "now" and it is but "for a little while." I think in light of that comparison, which is an understatement, we should say with Paul in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." It is but for a little while.

B. The condition related to these trials

Now let us proceed a little further into our text. It goes on to say, "...though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials..." If need be? Are there some of us who do not need trials?

Now I ask you, does this 'if' indicate there are some Christians who do not need trials. Well, the word if expresses a condition. And there are four classes of conditions in the original language of the NT. From the way a clause is worded you can tell which kind of condition it is. But if it is prefaced by the conditional word *ei* and followed by the indicative mood of the verb it is a condition of reality. That is what we have here. The translation might well be given thus, "if it is necessary that you have trials, and it is..."

One of the mysteries of the kingdom of God is the necessity of trials. I am well convinced by life and by Scripture that if lost people did not have trials they would all go to hell. If you and I had not experienced trials before we got saved we would never have become saved. And if you and I as Christians did not have trials, we would not become like Christ. So, if it was not for trials, God's whole plan would lie in ruins. And that is why God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for your sake." So, now for a little while, if need be, and it is, you have been grieved by various trials.

C. The modification of these trials - various

Now notice that the word trials is modified by the adjective, "various." We do not all go through identical trials but we all go through trials. And these trials are of various sorts. There are one hundred million different kinds of trials, but they are all trials. Many are common to us all. Some are common to a certain kind of person. Some are more common in one place than another, but they are all trials.

And I would say, if the devil can, he will turn you out of the narrow path because of trials. When God gave permission to the devil to give Job a workout, he used every kind of trial he could think of that would make this man turn out of the way. Now I want to tell you something about these various trials. Many, many Christians who started out on the right path will wind up in hell because they became bitter and rejected God by the onslaught of trials. You see, if this was never successful, the devil would not use it so much. When

Christians are persecuted a percentage of them deny God for freedom from torture or death.

Now let me make a little note here about the word translated 'trials' in the NKJV. It is translated 'temptations' in the KJV. It may carry that sense, but in this text, I believe, it is used in the sense of testings or trials. And let me remind us of another fact regarding these trials and testings. In all the path of trials in this present life, we need to remember that our Savior too faced them. And unlike most Christians, His earthly life ended on a very cruel cross.

"The road is too rough; "Dear Lord,
There are stones that hurt me so."
And He said, "Dear child, I understand.
I walked it long ago."

But there's a cool, green path," I said.
"Let me walk there for a time."
"No, child," He gently answered me;
"the green road does not climb."

"My burden," I said, "is far too great.
How can I bear it so?"
"My child," He said, "I remember its weight-
I carried My cross, you know."

"But," I said, "I wish there were friends with me
Who would make my way their own."
Ah, yes!: He said, "Gethsemane
Was hard to face alone."

And so I climbed the stony path-
Content at last to know
That where my Master had not gone
I would not have to go.

And strangely then I found new friends.
The burden grew less sore
As I remembered: Long ago
He went that way before!
Author not given.

II. THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS

A. To Test Our Faith

So, let us consider the purpose of trials as given in our passage. You see, our text goes on to answer a question for us. We might say, "Lord, what is the purpose of all these trials for You?" Verse seven begins with an important word, the word 'that', as 'in order that' or 'for the purpose of'. The Apostle Peter will now open a window in our understanding of God and the reason He allows trials into our lives.

So, listen to our text, "though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, IN ORDER THAT the genuiness of your faith...be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Now I want to say something here that I believe is important in our subject. God may allow difficult things into our lives, either to try our faith or to chasten us for some thing that needs to change in our lives. Let us be ever so careful not to mistake chastening for wrong behavior or trials for genuiness. And how do you know the difference? See if your heart is clean from known sin.

Now let me make one other comment here. When a person is truly saved, there comes a rejoicing of heart and you want everybody to have this experience. Everything just seems to be incredibly good. And then God begins to do a deeper work in one's life, and so the trials come. And in the midst of these trials, we may even come to where we wonder if we were ever truly saved. We can even come to the point where we are not very excited about telling others of this wonderful life that turned into a seeming mess of trials. I have given you the illustration of the rock polisher. God picked us up out of the miry clay, washed us off, and said, "This one looks like it will be beautiful." And so after He picked us out of the miry clay, we felt all cleaned up and everything was glorious for a while. And then He put us into the water, and then He put other rocks into the water with us too. And then He put in the grit. And then He turned on the polisher until we very well felt like begging for the tumbler to stop for a while. But I will tell you something. When we endure by faith, we can rest assured the day is coming when God will pick this polished gem out of the tumbler for the last time. And then He will say,

"Come home my child. I am done. Your faith is genuine." That is the purpose of these trials.

Maybe when you became a Christian you thought you were invincible and had great faith, above many others. But now you've been a Christian for some time and the trials of life have left their mark on you and possibly you even are wondering if you can go on with the Christian life. Consider the purpose of your trials this morning. They are there to test the genuineness of your faith!

So Peter writes in 4:12, "Beloved do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you..." May I ask you this morning, do you find yourself in a mix of trials, and you say, "This is strange. I never thought I was like this. What is going on here?" And let me bring God's Word to bear on your heart, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial..."

Now, you see, God is trying our faith. The Calvinist says our faith is a gift from God. It is not really 'our' faith. It is God's faith. Now why would He have to try the faith He gave us? Didn't He give us good faith? But it is not His faith that is under test, it is our faith. This faith is our responsibility! We must believe and we must go on believing. No matter what our circumstances or trials, we must believe. It must be our choice to believe no matter what befalls us.

Now I want you to see how valuable a commodity genuine faith is to God. Peter says it is much more precious than gold that perishes. And I ask, to whom is this genuine faith worth so much? Is it so valuable to God or to us? Well, I may be wrong, but I have concluded that this faith is so valuable to God. There is one thing He looks for above all others. You can find that from Genesis to Revelation, and it is this: genuine faith. So the writer of Hebrews says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Now notice that genuine faith is considered above the value of gold. That is especially relevant today with souring gold prices. And I want to try to give you a

little picture of how absorbed God is in seeking genuine faith in us. I did a little exploration for gold for a small company far in the north of British Columbia. I got some idea of this thing of gold and its value. And I am not sure if it was these men or somebody else, but I was told of several men who ran a gold claim. And they finally got to sluicing the dirt. They have a sluice box and put the dirt into it and then wash the dirt out with water while any gold sinks to the bottom and is caught in little ridges at the bottom of the sluice box.

When these men finally got to sluicing, gold fever hit one of the men so hard that they could not get him away from the sluice box. Mosquitoes and bugs were biting him and he did not even try to chase them away. He had one all consuming passion, and that was looking for gold. It got so bad they could not reason with him and they had to tie him down and take him out.

This man was looking for gold that perishes. Now I want you to notice that our faith is not as precious as gold, nor is it more precious than gold; it is MUCH MORE PRECIOUS than gold that perishes! And I do not want to liken God to someone who has gone mad about some very valuable commodity, but I want you to see God with this all consuming passion of bringing about genuine faith in us. He is all absorbed in this one thing that pleases Him above everything else. And so many go into the sluice box for testing, but they just wash out the end of the sluice box of no value. But every once in a while a nugget sinks to the bottom. And when God finds this nugget, He will put it in a crucible to test its genuineness.

So, I want us to notice one more thing here in our text which says, "...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, *though it is tested by fire...*" Let me give you an illustration of testing gold from Amy Carmichael, missionary to India's underprivileged. She writes in her book *Gold Cord*, "One day we took the children to see a goldsmith refine gold after the ancient manner of the East. He was sitting beside his little charcoal fire." (Let me mention her that Amy Carmichael then inserts this part of a verse, "He shall sit as a refiner". She also adds that the gold or silversmith

never leaves his crucible once it is on the fire.) She then goes on to say, "In the red glow lay a common curved roof-tile; another tile covered it like a lid. This was the crucible. In it was the medicine made of salt, tamarind fruit and burnt brick-dust, and embedded in it was the gold. The medicine does its appointed work on the gold, then 'the fire eats it,' and the goldsmith lifts the gold out with a pair of tongs, lets it cool, rubs it between his fingers, and if not satisfied puts it back in fresh medicine. This time he blows the fire hotter than it was before, and each time he puts the gold into the crucible the heat of the fire is increased: 'It could not bear it so hot at first but it can bear it now; what would have destroyed it then helps it now.' 'How do you know when the gold is purified?' we asked him, and he answered, 'when I can see my face in it [the liquid gold in the crucible] then it is pure.'"

As gold is tested by fire, faith is tested by trials. No fire, no pure gold. No trials, no pure faith. Now it is simply instructive to know how the goldsmith determines whether the gold is pure. He looks into the crucible, and when the gold reflects his image like a glass mirror, he knows it is pure. As long as it does not do that, it is not fully genuine. God knows His trials have purified our faith when He can see His Son Jesus Christ in us. When we reflect the image of Christ, which He is seeking to conform us to, then the trials of life have brought about that which God sought.

Now that container that is used by the refiner of gold is called a crucible. It is a heat resistant container used to heat metals to extreme heat. And when God finds the gold of faith in a person, He puts him in the crucible and then He turns up the heat. And at extreme temperatures the test of the genuineness of faith begins. I ask you, is your faith real?

Our deacon, Phil Friesen gave a message on assurance of salvation a while ago. He quoted Dr. D. James Kennedy in 'The Evidence Bible', who says: "The vast majority of people who are members of churches in America today are not Christians. I say that without the slightest fear of contradiction. I base it on empirical evidence of twenty-four years of examining

thousands of people." Having asked you if your faith is real, may I ask you, how are you doing in the crucible of trials?

B. To Reward Our Faith

1. The content of this reward

Now let us go a little further in our text to the reward of genuine faith after it has come out of the crucible. Notice these words, "...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, *may be found to praise and honor and glory!* Now we might well ask the question: will it be to God's praise and honor and glory, or the believer's. I think it is the believer whose faith has been tested and found genuine. He will be praised and honored and given glory by God Almighty Himself! In Matthew 25, when the righteous were judged the Lord said, "Come, you blessed of My Father..." The Lord praised these victorious believers. And He calls them blessed of the Father. In 25:21 it says, "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" In verse 23 we have almost the same words.

I believe that in heaven, that which these trials have brought forth will be displayed for all. God will be vindicated for taking the believer to heaven by this display, and He will praise, and honor, and expose the glory of these believers for all the rest of the inhabitants for all eternity! It may well be that here on earth, few might know of what you have achieved by faith. There may be genuine faith exposed in you by the work of trials which nobody recognizes here on earth. But in glory, it will all be revealed and we will rejoice in one another as well as in God. Maybe a good part of eternity will be taken up getting to know how each of our lives of faith was tested and how we overcame.

Now I would be remiss not to tell you that it says that '...it MAY BE FOUND to praise and honor and glory.' The verb is a subjunctive. There are those who have come to trials they found unbearable, and they gave up. Some, at such trials, abandon faith altogether. This life, this 'little while' is the test. Do not give up in the crucible.

2. The time of this reward

But notice now further, the time of this reward. The Apostle Peter desires that our faith be found to praise, honor and glory *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. I want to assure you this morning, dear pilgrim, the revelation of Jesus Christ is not far away. Soon, and very soon, we shall see the King. Oh, if only I were eloquent enough to give us a glimpse of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords when He returns. But in light of such huge truths, this stammering tongue can only tell you it will be worth it all when we see Him. As I look around, the signs of his return are everywhere. They are there in nature. They are there in the nations. They are there in deadly maladies and they are there in the false religions. They are even there in the churches that are departing from the faith. And "Just a few more weary days and then, we'll all fly away."

CONCL. And so, I ask, is your faith genuine yet? Is my faith genuine yet? Some time ago I edited a short writing and called it seven evidences of the crucified life. Let me edit it a little more and read it like this:

1. When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight but your heart is content and restful in Christ, THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.
2. "When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient loving silence," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.
3. "When you lovingly and politely bear any disorder, any irregularity, any unpunctuality, or any annoyance; when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility...and endure it as JESUS endured it," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.
4. "When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, and interruption by the will of GOD," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.

5. "When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.

6. "When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met, and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question GOD, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstance," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.

7. "When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart," THAT IS AN EVIDENCE OF PURE GOLD.

A young lady by name of Janie was raised by the staff of the Buckner's Baptist Orphanage in Dallas Texas. But at an early age she had been diagnosed with Leukimia, and the doctors had given no hope for her. Her Leukimia went into remission. She later married William Metzgar and became Janie Metzgar. He was an Assembly of God preacher and Janie became the mother of five children. But in those years she lived in a lot of pain. In those years she wrote many songs and hymns, one of which all of you have heard and most of you have sung. I want our sound folk to put this a song on from the internet sung by the Cathedrals. Feel free to sing with them.

I am going to a city
Where the streets of gold are laid,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
And the roses never fade.

In this world we have our troubles,
Satan's snares we must evade;
We'll be free from all temptations
Where the roses never fade.

Loved ones gone to be with Jesus,
In their robes of white arrayed,
Now are waiting for my coming
Where the roses never fade.

Chorus:

Here they bloom but for a season,
Soon their beauty is decayed;
I am going to a city
Where the roses never fade.