

REJOICING IN TRIALS

1 Peter 1:6-7

INTRODUCTION

- God refers to his saints as his “jewels” (Malachi 3:17), and his “peculiar treasure” (Psalm 135:4)
- The rough gemstones in their uncut states have no particular beauty and are of relatively little value
- It is only when the gemcutter with expert skill applies his tools to cleave, cut and polish that the glory and the value of the gem is realised
- In the same way, the Lord takes a Christian with all his roughness and ugliness, and by his grace turns him into a precious jewel
- And the primary tool he uses for this purpose is “trials”
- Both believers and unbelievers suffer trials, but unbelievers have no faith to be tried, and have no divine promises to comfort them through their trials
- The best they can do is attempt to make some sense of their suffering with sayings like, “what doesn’t kill me, makes me stronger” (Nietzsche, 1888)
- It is futile to seek any meaning in a meaningless existence
- But for the believer, our times are in God’s hand (Psalm 31:15), and there is a purpose to all that we experience in this life, and especially in our trials

- God is shaping and moulding us, removing the “dross” from us, changing and conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ
- Not only is the Lord preparing a place for his people (John 14:2), he is preparing his people for that place
- Heaven is a holy place, for a holy people (Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 21:27)
- Verse 6 begins with the great rejoicing the Christian has in his salvation, referring back to vv.3-5
- We have the greatest reason to have the greatest rejoicing when we know that though we are sinful wretches who deserve nothing but hell forever, we yet have been granted forgiveness, adoption, everlasting life and an inheritance in glory!
- But note that this rejoicing (present tense) takes place even while believers are “in heaviness through manifold temptations”
- It would make more sense to us if Peter had said, “Ye *will* rejoice” after your troubles are over
- This union of gladness with sadness is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life
 - ✓ To live is to die (Mark 8:34-35; Galatians 2:20)
 - ✓ To be chief is to be servant (Matthew 20:27)
 - ✓ Strength is in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
 - ✓ The humble are exalted (Matthew 23:12)
- The principle of the Christian’s rejoicing in suffering is often repeated in the New Testament

- ✓ Blessedness is pronounced on those persecuted for Christ's sake, who can "rejoice and be exceeding glad" (Matthew 5:11-12)
- ✓ The apostles rejoiced in their persecutions (Acts 5:41; 16:25)
- ✓ We glory in tribulations (Romans 5:3)
- ✓ The tried Christian is "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:9-10)
- ✓ The Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

Consider these reasons why we can and must rejoice even in the midst of trials:

I. REJOICE IN THE PASSING OF TRIALS

- A. They are but for a season
 1. The word of season (*oligos*) indicates "small," "little" in regard to quantity, size, and time
 2. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment..." (2 Corinthians 4:17)
 3. Relative to eternity, these mortal lives are momentary
- B. Knowing there is an "end" to our afflictions helps us to persevere through them
 1. "He who has fixed the bounds of our habitation has also fixed the bounds of our tribulation." (Spurgeon)

2. The end of the upright is peace, but the end of the wicked shall be cut off (Psalm 37:37-38)
3. We are to look to “the end” of our salvation which is everlasting life, joy and peace (Romans 6:22; James 5:11; 1 Peter 1:13)
4. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. (Psalm 30:5)
5. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Galatians 6:9)

II. REJOICE IN THE PROVIDENCE OF TRIALS

- A. Trials are necessary – “If need be”
 1. The “if” does not indicate any doubt, but assumes the truth of the condition
 2. There is a *necessity* to the believer’s suffering
 3. Those trials that we groan under and complain about, “I don’t need this!”, God says, “You need this!”
- B. God knows what we need for our spiritual good and graciously applies it to our lives
 1. He afflicts in faithfulness (Psalm 119:75)
 2. He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men (Lamentations 3:32-33)
 3. As a Father, he chastens us for our profit (Hebrews 12:7-11)

4. “How soon you will find that everything in your history, except sin, has been for you. Every wave of trouble has been wafting you to the sunny shores of a sinless eternity.” (Robert Murray M’Cheyne)

C. Trials are “manifold”

1. This word (*poikilos*) indicates various, diversified, variegated, multicoloured (cf. James 1:2)
2. Not all trials are the same – some have the blueness of depression, some have a grey of sickness, some are red with fiery ferocity and violence, and others have the blackness of death
3. Yet whatever shade our manifold trials take, God’s manifold grace (1 Peter 4:10) is more than sufficient to match and overcome them

III. REJOICE IN THE PRESSURE OF TRIALS

- A. The word “temptations” (*peirasmois*) means “trials”
1. Depending on the context it can refer to temptation to sin, or trials/tests from God to challenge our faithfulness to God’s will
- B. These trials produce “heaviness”
1. The word for “heaviness” (*lupeo*) signifies distress, sadness, sorrow, grief
 2. The Christian experience is not one of uninterrupted happiness and mirth, but includes mourning (Matthew 5:4), weeping (Luke 6:21), great heaviness and continual sorrow (Romans 9:2), affliction and distress (1

Thessalonians 3:7; James 5:13) and anguish of heart (2 Corinthians 2:4)

3. The Psalms, in the traversing the whole range of the saint's experience and emotion, reveal both the heights of exuberant joy in the Lord, as well as the depths of sorrow and depression (Psalm 42:3,5; 119:28,83)
 4. The Christian ought not respond to trials with indifference as the Stoics, putting on a brave face, and maintaining a "stiff upper lip" in order to appear "spiritual"
 4. Such a denial of pain is to make the pain worse
- C. Christ, our example, suffered such heaviness in his soul during his passion
1. The Lord Jesus experienced much suffering and hardship during his earthly ministry
 2. But it was not until the end that he felt the *heaviness* of suffering
 3. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Christ wrestled in prayer with the Father concerning the cup he must drink, he began to be "sorrowful and very heavy" (Matthew 26:37), "sore amazed" (Mark 14:33), and "in an agony" (Luke 22:44)
 4. We cannot begin to comprehend the depths of Christ's anguish of soul in that awful moment when he "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7-9)
 5. Christ knows personally our heaviness in trials – he is touched, not only with our infirmities, but the *feeling* of

them (Hebrews 4:15) and he is able to succour them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18)

IV. REJOICE IN THE PRECIOUSNESS OF TRIALS

- A. It is our *faith* that is tried, not our strength or will-power
 - 1. A faith that is not tested is a faith that cannot be trusted
 - 2. This trial of faith “proves” the nature of it, whether it is genuine or a mere profession
 - 3. God did tempt (try) Abraham by commanding him to offer Isaac (Genesis 22:1-2), and the end result was Abrahams faith in God was proven to be true (Genesis 22:12)
- B. The trial of faith is likened to gold tried in a fire
 - 1. Raw gold must undergo a process of purification under intense heat, where the dross is separated and the soundness and quality of the gold is discovered
 - 2. Our faith is the gold and the furnace is the trials (Malachi 3:3)
 - 3. The Eastern goldsmith was said to have kept the precious metal in the furnace until he could see his face reflected in it
 - 4. Our trials burn away the impurities of the flesh and carnal nature, leaving us refined and conformed to God’s image
 - 5. It is altogether good that we are afflicted (Psalm 119:71)
- C. The trial of faith is a most precious thing

1. It is precious in its purifying us of sin (Psalm 119:67)
2. It is precious in its supplies of divine grace to sustain us (Hebrews 4:16)
3. It is precious in the comfort and nearness of God we enjoy (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
4. It is precious in its eternal rewards at the coming of Christ (v.7)

CONCLUSION

1. The believer, like Moses, chooses to suffer affliction with the people of God for a season, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25-26)
2. The Christian's heaviness will be lifted in glory; his every tear will be wiped away by God
3. But the heaviness of the unbeliever is not lifted at death, but becomes infinitely greater, most of all because there is no hope of it ever being removed
4. How do you view trials, as unwanted, unneeded intruders, or as necessary divine blessings, sent to us for our eternal good?
5. Resolve with Habakkuk, to, in every circumstance, under every affliction, adversity and trial, to say, "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-19)