

Suffering and Rejoicing (1Peter 1:1-7)

Introduction: *The sovereign power, salvation, and preservation of God (v. 1-5)*

If God has saved us with such a great salvation, why O why should we be “grieved by various trials” (1Pe 1:6)? Where is his power to protect his people?

Why do you suffer for your faith in Christ? (v. 7)

1. Trials prove your faith to be genuine.

“When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). “When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles” (Matt 13:20-22).

Pliny the Younger’s letter to Emperor Trajan: “The contagion of this superstition has permeated not only the cities, but also the villages and even the country districts. Apparently, though, it can be halted and corrected.”

2. Trials make your faith appear genuinely beautiful, wonderful, and valuable.

Your faith is more precious than gold, and trials reveal that. Faith has great value in the world. When we learn that our faith does not fail us in the hour of trial, that God is surely bringing us to heaven by it (v. 5, see Luke 22:32, 1John 5:4).

3. Trials refine the purity of your faith.

Gold is tested by fire, not just to prove that it’s real gold, but also to refine it, to remove any impurity and mixture which would compromise its value. Faith is even more precious than gold—for gold will perish with this world (see 1Tim 6:17).

The martyrdom of Polycarp: “While he spoke these and many other like things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace....”

4. Trials will result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Probably this is the praise, glory, and honor of Christians before the Lord, the Righteous Judge. For example, Matthew 5:11-12, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kind of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven” (see Heb 10:34).

Conclusion: *Octavius (a conversation, c. AD 211, leading to the conversion of Cecilius)*

Cecilius: As you yourself admit, most of you are needy, cold, and work in heavy labor even while you are hungry. And God allows it! He is either unable or unwilling to help his people, and thus he is either weak or unjust.

Octavius: Let me be clear, though, that if we thought wealth was useful for us, we would ask God for it. We are confident that God would answer us in some measure, because he possesses everything. But we would rather despise riches than possess them. What we want is innocence, and what we pray for is patience. We prefer being good to being lavish.

Cecilius: For you specifically there are threats, punishments, tortures, and crosses. And those crosses aren’t objects of adoration, but tortures to be endured. Where is that God who is able to help you when you come to life again, when he can’t even help you in this life?

Octavius: It’s a beautiful thing to God when a Christian does battle with pain. When he faces threats, punishments and tortures by mocking death and treading underfoot the horror of the executioner; when he raises up his freedom in Christ as a standard before kings and princes; when he yields to God alone and, triumphant and victorious, he tramples upon the very man who has pronounced the sentence upon him. God finds all these things beautiful.