



1Peter - Lesson 1B

Chapter 1:6-12

814 Arion Parkway, #410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
210.319.5055

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One night in 1903, after delivering a sermon on the sympathy of Jesus at Chicago's Salvation Army Citadel, Frederick Booth-Tucker was approached by a man who was rather unimpressed. "If your wife had just died, like mine has," he declared, "and your babies were crying for their mother, who would never come back, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying."

Incredibly, a few days later, Tucker's own wife was killed in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the same Citadel for the funeral. After the service the bereaved preacher gazed into his wife's silent face before turning to the assembled guests.

"The other day a man told me I wouldn't speak of the sympathy of Jesus if my wife had just died," he declared. "If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ is sufficient."

- Nothing tests the faith of a Christian quite so much as a trial of life
 - It's in those moments that we discover what we truly believe
 - And like the fire that tests precious metal, the trial proves the worth of our faith
- Peter understood trials, and Peter understood that Christ was sufficient in the face of those trials
 - And as we began to study last week, he knew that if his readers could share his perspective, they would also face their trials with the strength of Christ
- In his first letter, he's opened in Chapter 1 describing the reader's faith from three vantage points
 - Past, present and future
 - With each vantage point, Peter gives the reader something to cherish
 - Something to grab hold of to appreciate just how special their relationship in Christ was
 - To build some perspective, in other words

1Pet. 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

1Pet. 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory

and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1Pet. 1:8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1Pet. 1:9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

- Last week Peter began in verse 3 looking at the future of our faith
 - It was a view of the permanent and imperishable reward, the inheritance that our Father has waiting for His children
 - These are the gifts of reward and substance that remind us of the love our

Father has for His children

- An inheritance that was prepared before the foundations of the earth for those who love Him
- In the passage we begin with this morning, Peter moves to the present nature of our salvation
 - If the future holds rewards, the present seems to hold trials
 - Well it certainly did for his readers
 - What a strange means of encouraging his readers
 - Perhaps Peter knows something about the spiritual benefit of trials
- The first thing we observe in verse 6 is the temporary nature of our present vantage point
 - Remember how he described the future of our salvation?
 - Verse 4: imperishable, unfading, reserved in heaven
 - Verse 5: the reality of our future in heaven protected by God
 - Friends, what's permanent is the unseen reality of the eternal realm
 - What's temporary is what we experience here today
 - The material world, the achievements, the relationships, the trials, disappointments
- The heart of Peter's point begins in verse 7
 - Peter draws a comparison between faith itself and gold
 - Gold was the most valuable material found on earth in Peter's day
 - Now gold is still very valuable today, but there are some things more valuable than gold
 - But in Peter's day, gold was in fact the "gold standard"
 - Nothing in earthly terms was more precious
 - But Peter says faith is far more valuable
 - On what basis is our faith more valuable than gold?
 - On the same basis as everything else
 - Because gold – as valuable as it is – perishes at the end of this age
 - But faith brings about the salvation of your souls, which is an eternal commodity
 - Here again, worth is measured in the economy of eternity
 - When you look around your life and take note of the things you place value on
 - Ask yourself are you assigning value according to the measuring stick that scripture uses?
 - Are you measuring against the standard of eternity?
 - It will be impossible for Peter's readers – and for us – to successfully weather the trials that may come so long as their eyes remain focused on the temporal rather than the eternal

- Because if we see our safety and security and peace and happiness and contentment originating in the world rather than in our relationship and future eternity with Christ
 - Then we will inevitably make bad choices, and decisions and judgments
 - And our obedience and witness to the Lord will suffer
- In fact, Peter's next point rests entirely on his readers maintaining eyes for eternity
 - Peter says that our trials are the proof of our faith
 - Look in verses 6 Peter says his readers were distressed by various trials and in verse 7 he says these trials are the proof of their faith may be revealed
 - So trials in our faith mark our present experience in the faith, and they serve as proof of our faith
- First, Peter says that trials provide an opportunity for proof of faith
 - More specifically, our response to trials reveals the character of our faith
 - Before we understand what Peter is saying here, let's be clear on what Peter is not saying
 - Peter isn't saying that trials create faith, or bring us to faith, or increase our faith as if it were growing along some continuum toward salvation
 - Scripture is absolutely and consistently clear that saving faith is not measured on a continuum

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

- Remember the poor jailer who was terrified when the jail was rocked by an earthquake

Acts 16:30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

Acts 16:33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

Acts 16:34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

- The testimony of scripture is unambiguous on this point:

- Our faith in Christ saves us immediately, completely, permanently
- Then what is the effect of a trial on our faith?
 - By necessity, it is limited to one of two effects
 - A trial either reveals that we have not yet truly believed
 - And by the trial, the wheat and the tares are separated
 - Secondly, the trial strengthens the believer's hope and reliance in their faith
- In the first case, the trial reveals the unbelief of a pretender
 - In the second case, the trial confirms the presence of faith to the doubter
- Both purposes have eternal value to a God who wishes to separate the light from the darkness
- Remember how James begins his challenging letter:

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- He says we have reason to rejoice in trials
 - The reason for joy?
 - Because the trial has tested our faith
 - And testing is a good thing
 - Testing verifies the truth of our confession
 - Because there is only one thing worse than an unbeliever who knows they are an unbeliever
 - And that is an unbeliever, who doesn't know it
 - James says that our faith having been tested leads to confidence and hope...just as gold is purified through fire
 - We will develop confidence in our future and endurance in our walk with the Lord
 - And endurance, James says, will result that we lack nothing
 - Ultimately our glorification
- Later in James' letter, he uses Abraham as an example of what this process looks like
 - In Genesis 15:6, God declares Abraham to be righteous because he heard God's promise of a son and believed God's word
 - Abraham was righteous
 - James reminds us of that moment in Chapter 2 when he says this:

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

James 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God.

- In the decades after God declared Abraham to be righteous on the basis of faith, Abraham didn't have such a great testimony
 - He tries to make his own heir through Hagar
 - He goes to Egypt and lies about his wife
 - Then after Isaac does come along, Abraham allows his wife to mistreat Hagar
 - If you had been looking for proof of Abraham's belief in God's promises, I'm not sure if you could have found it
 - Which is why James uses that fascinating phrase
 - “Scripture was fulfilled”
 - Abraham was declared righteous by faith in Chapter 15, but the fulfillment, the opportunity to see the faith of Abraham lived out finally occurred in Chapter 22
 - God gave Abraham the trial, the test that was needed to demonstrate Abraham's faith
- Peter says much the same thing in the verse we read
 - In verse 9 we will obtain as the outcome of these trials the salvation of our souls
 - Not because we earn salvation through trials – such a misinterpretation not only misunderstands all that Peter is saying, but also the rest of the Bible
 - No, because in the trials we come to understand that we are saved, that we have a faith that can survive trial
 - And trials, like fire, purify and reveal the truth of our confessions
 - But if trials reveal the true believer, then we should also remember that sometimes the trial reveals that not all confessions of faith are genuine
 - Some are shown to be true, but some fall away and are shown to be false
- By the way, have you stopped to consider what it would mean if in your life you never experienced trials that tested your faith?
 - It might sound good at first, but remember what James said...
 - Count it joy that we have trials
 - So if it's joy to have trials, what would it be not to have trials?
 - We said last week that the Greek word for trial indicates an eternal event that comes upon us
 - Not an event we bring upon ourselves
 - We'll have plenty of those too, but we're talking here about something that comes upon you without any perceived blame
- Well, consider what the writer of Hebrews tells us in Chapter 12

Heb. 12:3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Heb. 12:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Heb. 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

**“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;**

Heb. 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

Heb. 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Heb. 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- In quoting from Proverbs, the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers how discipline from the Lord is not only a good thing
 - It's an essential thing
 - And it is for discipline – for trials – that we endure
 - And we will desire discipline if we understand what discipline means
 - It means we are legitimate sons (and daughters)
 - Because a loving father will discipline his children
 - And if we didn't experience discipline, we would be illegitimate children
 - The literal word in Greek means bastard, or a son who has a mother but doesn't know who his father is
 - So according to scripture, if we have not experienced God's discipline in our lives (trials), then we are illegitimate
 - An illegitimate child is one who tries to claim a father who is not truly their father
 - We are not of our Father in heaven, but we remain of our father the devil
- Consider all the things a father can do in caring for his children
 - He can feed them, clothe them, protect them from injury or other harm
 - He can teach them, he can play with them and he can care for them when they are sick, etc.

- But all these things are things that this same father could do to any child
 - That father could feed, cloth, educate, nurse, or play with anyone's child if necessary
- But the one thing that distinguishes a true father from an illegitimate one is discipline
 - A true father can discipline a child, but he cannot discipline someone else's child
 - Firstly, he will probably risk a charge of assault or child abuse
 - Secondly, the child himself will not receive the correction of a man who is not his father
 - In blended families where a stepfather comes into a family with children, that man will know when he's truly received by those children
 - It will be when they receive his loving discipline
- The writer then adds in verse 10 that our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time for reasons they felt best
 - But our father in heaven is disciplining us for eternal purposes
 - Here again, the perspective we need can only be found in an appreciation that God's timescale is the one that matters, not the world's
 - Just as the writer say, trials don't seem joyful
 - But if you consider that trials that discipline us and test our faith are proof that we are a child of God
 - Then we can take joy in them, but only if we see them through the eyes of eternity
- There's an important principle represented in this passage and in the passage of Hebrews
 - Instant gratification is the opposite of God's call on the life of a Christian
 - If we take the goal of instant gratification that reigns in our culture and try to make it a spiritual goal as well
 - Then we will completely distort the nature of the Christian experience
 - And we will be utterly frustrated and disappointed
 - And ultimately, we may fail to achieve anything of spiritual substance with the life God gives us here and now
 - Before we leave this passage, we should take a second to note how Peter again reminds the readers how much they have rejoiced in their faith
 - A faith that relies not on the physical manifestations of Christ
 - Not on physical proof, or personal experience
 - Rather, just on the hope that comes from supernaturally derived faith
 - Eyes for eternity
- Finally, Peter moves to the final vantage point
 - The past character of our salvation

- We might even be tempted to ask how could our salvation have a past?
 - We can understand how it has a present reality and a future reward
 - But what do we mean by a past?

1Pet. 1:10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,

1Pet. 1:11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

1Pet. 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

- Peter begins with the phrase, as to this salvation...
 - He's not speaking strictly in a personal sense now
 - Your salvation, my salvation
 - In other words, speaking about God's plan for redemption
- The prophets of the Bible spoke prophetically of the coming grace of a Messiah
 - And in that revelation they were also given the understanding to know that this message wasn't for them, or their generation
 - From our vantage point now, we can clearly see their prophecies spoke of Jesus as the Messiah
 - Rather, the ultimate purpose of their prophecies was in how it would draw men to Christ after His death and resurrection
- And secondly, Peter says these prophets searched the Spirit of Christ that lived within them to know who the Messiah would be and when He would arrive
 - They wanted the privilege of knowing about this Christ they spoke of prophetically
 - But even more importantly, they had a hard time fitting the two pieces of the Messiah's ministry together
 - How can a Messiah suffer and glory?
 - How does the king die and reign?
 - They longed to understand God's redemptive plan, but we have the privilege to see it played out
- Next week we'll answer the question in our hearts of, so what?
 - We've got future rewards
 - We've got trials
 - So what?
- What is our expectation in response?