

Trials of Faith

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Date: 26 January 2025

Preacher: Rev James MacIver

[0 : 00] A warm welcome again to the service this evening. I trust the Lord will be with us and bless his word to us as we worship him together. We're going to begin our worship singing in Psalm 138. I'll read from the beginning and will then sing from verse 4 through to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 139.

Psalm 139.

The earth of God shall give me praise, O Lord. When I'll live from thy voice shall hear thy true and faithful words.

In the righteous ways of God, with us and saints sing.

[2 : 02] For this the glory of the Lord, who does forever reign.

O God, be high, yet he respects all those that know thee be.

We're not such a love, he wants a fire of cruelty.

For I am blessed, O Lord. For I am blessed, O Lord. And I will never pray, O Lord.

And I will never pray, O Lord.

[3 : 25] To be that rich, so sternly, the Lord will perfect me.

For stillness, I am in peace, and I do not, I know who has worked for me.

Let's unite now in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Gracious and eternal God, we give thanks that you have given us such encouraging words to sing in the praise of your name, and that you have given us so many promises as we gather here in your presence, promises that we find throughout your word addressed to those who love and respect you and fear you.

And we pray that that may be the chief characteristic of our worship this evening, that we may truly worship you in the fear of God. We thank you, O Lord, for this opportunity once again to come together around your word.

We bless you once more for the prospect that we have that you will be in the midst of your people, that you will be here to bless those who are your own and bless those who hear the gospel.

[4 : 52] And we ask that you would bless us here together as we come once more around your word. We give thanks, Gracious One, that your word has already directed us to our need of you, and to our response when we come to know your help.

And we pray that that will be always the case with us, that whatever circumstances we may have in this life in your providence, enable us, Lord, to be convinced that they are arranged by you, and that because you have arranged them for us, if we come and trust and continue to trust in you.

So you will guide us through them and bless that to us. We give thanks that even the sufferings of your people are blessed under your hand, and that your word makes it amply clear to us that even those difficulties and trials that your people experience in this life are contributing towards that final glory that will be theirs as you present them perfect in your presence.

Remember us then, Lord, we pray as we go through the various aspects of life in this world. Bless us in all the circumstances, even in this coming week in which we find ourselves.

We know not what a day might bring about, but we know that when we come to place our confidence and trust in the Lord, whatever each day brings about, that we are safe in the hand of the Lord.

[6 : 20] You have given your people a security that cannot be broken, a security that the enemy of our soul can never remove from us. We pray, Lord, that you would give us tonight that confidence, in yourself of knowing that trusting in you, we are indeed safe with you.

We ask your blessing to be with this commutation of your people. We thank you for their ongoing witness here in this district. We thank you for every effort made in order to present the gospel to those around.

We give thanks for that ongoing witness of your people, and for the interest, even this evening, in coming together here to worship the Lord. O Lord, we pray that you would bless them in these days to come.

We pray that you would grant to them your guidance, as they once again seek to find a minister who will preach the gospel to them and preside over them under your own shepherding care.

Lord, we give thanks for the years of ministry in this congregation since its inception, so many years ago now. We give thanks that that still continues to bear fruit.

[7 : 35] We pray that that will be the case in years to come. We ask that you would give your people here that patient waiting upon yourself, and that guidance and that steerage of your spirit, that will eventually come, we pray, to have someone of their choosing, but especially of your choosing, and to be set over them as a minister of the gospel.

Remember all other congregations in our island at this time, in our presbytery area, Lord, we pray that you'd bless them, especially we pray for those that are vacant like this one.

And while it is many years since we last had so many vacancies all at once, we know that you provided for us in the past, and that you did so, Lord, in your own time.

And we pray that that will be the case, even in our day as well. That we may see in your provision of those who will be sent forth into the harvest fields of the world, and come to declare the gospel.

And again, we pray that you would raise up others who will, by your own calling, offer themselves to the ministry of the gospel. Bless us thereby, we pray, as a church, as a denomination, that we may see many coming in the days to come, who will come to be, be eventually set over congregations throughout the land.

[8 : 57] And it will be made mighty and powerful through your own Holy Spirit. And it will come to be committed entirely to your word, and to its teaching, and to its concerns.

And we pray that you would bless those presently training for ministry. And we commend them to you in your seminary. We ask that you would bless them, and bless those who teach them.

And we do pray that they may turn out, O Lord, to be people filled with the Holy Spirit. Whatever it is, you cast their lot. Whatever it is, you guide them to serve you, we pray.

That it may be to the advance of your kingdom. That it may be to the growth of many souls, and the intake of many others yet, who in hearing the gospel will come to be drawn to yourself, and drawn into these avenues of salvation.

We pray again, that you would remember us, Lord, in terms of our need as a nation. We ask that you would turn your face from our iniquities. We confess before you, Lord, the many sins that we know in ourselves, and also in the way in which we find matters in our nation at this time.

[10 : 10] Where so little regard is paid to you, to your gospel, to your word, to your commands. Forgive us, Lord, we pray, for how much we have cast aside these great truths of your word.

And be pleased to grant those in government over us, that they may do so, Lord, in the fear of the Lord. They may do so with heavenly wisdom from above, rather than that mere wisdom of men.

Which can only end in hurt, and ultimately a disaster. Your word, so often told your covenant people, down through the years of the Old Testament age, and the consequences of turning away from the Lord.

And you demonstrated that to them, O Lord, when you ultimately gave them to the captivity of the enemy, down through the years, and especially for the many years that they spent in Babylon, gracious Lord, help us to take the principles that are set out for us there, to apply them to our own age as well.

And enable us, we pray as a people, to see our poverty without you. Lord, we can claim to be of which in so many ways. We can claim the advances of so much technology, and we can look to our economic situation, and to other aspects of our daily lives, and seek to find in these, our ultimate security, but we won't find them.

[11 : 33] We know that our security can only be, in our being obedient to the Lord, and in following his ways. So hear us, Lord, as we pray, for ourselves, and for our people, at this time.

Send forth the power of your Spirit, the power of the Gospel, to transform us, to bring us more and more into conformity, with your will, and with the likeness of Christ.

We ask that you bless those unable, to be with us tonight. Remember, those who are ill at this time, Lord, be pleased to draw near to them. Lay your good hand upon them, we pray, and whatever the outcome will be, if they recover or otherwise, Lord, we pray that you would instruct them, at this time.

Remember, too, those who mourn, or the passing of loved ones. They're always in our communities, in our family circles. We pray that you would grant blessing, whenever that comes to us, and whenever we hear of others, Lord, in our district, even in these days, who have come to know loved ones, passing from time, into eternity.

Lord, graciously, and bind our souls, we pray, in the peace that comes from you alone. Grant them your comfort, your consolation, your guidance, and your peace in the mind, at this time.

[12 : 50] We pray that, in all our concerns, O Lord, we may be taught of your Spirit, and that we may be taught, to look to you, and look heavenwards, so that we may find, our consolation there.

Now, hear us, we pray, as we address, these concerns to you, and as we seek, to magnify you in praise, Lord, help us to do so, using all that we know, and what you have taught us already, but especially coming to, once again, guide us, by your Spirit, into these great avenues, of your truth.

And as we confess, our sins, which are many, O Lord, we pray your forgiveness, we pray, that you would cleanse us, from our many sins, that you would establish us, in righteousness, in the ways of the Lord.

We pray that we may rejoice, in that forgiveness, that the Lord himself, alone, is able to bring. And we ask tonight, that that may be, one of our great concerns, to know that our iniquity, is covered, that our sin, is forgiven, that our transgressions, are not held against us.

So hear us now, we pray, and do for us more, than we can ask or think, when we ask it all, in Jesus name, and for his sake. Amen. Let's praise the Lord again, from Psalm 119, Psalm 119, and from verse 65.

[14 : 22] We'll sing that section, down to verse 72. Well hast thou with thy servant dealt, as thou didst promise give. Good judgment, me in knowledge teach, for I thy word believe.

Ere I afflicted was, I strayed, but now I keep thy word. Both good thou art, and good thou doest. Teach me thy statutes, Lord. The men that are puffed up, with pride, against me forged a lie.

Yet thy commandments observe, with my whole heart, will I. That section to the end of verse 72. Well hast thou with thy servant dealt.

Well hast thou with thy servant dealt, the sound that's call has killed.

through judgment, through judgment, through judgment, How knowledge teach All I thy word believe As I have waited Was I stray From the power of my teeth Thy word For good thou art How good thou do Teach me thy child to score The man that I have Of the first try Against me for the sky

[16 : 19] Yet night, O man, With dreams of sin With my whole heart Will I The heart's reward Reheath And when A smile Has been Saving That is thy home Bring all my day In life For danger The top thing Very good for me And I And I

And I The Lord of the Lord is better than to me, than any thousands and great thousands of gold and silver.

The reading of God's word this evening is in 1 Peter, the first letter of Peter, and reading chapter 1.

We can read from the beginning. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, and to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace unto you and peace be multiplied.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[19 : 28] Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season it need be, here in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls, of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and to whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into.

And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. For as much as you know you are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth forever.

Sing once more to his praise in Psalm 34, Psalm number 34, and singing verses 17 to 22. Psalm 34, The Lord doth set him free.

The Lord redeems his servant souls. None perish that him trust. From verse 17, the righteous cry unto the Lord. The righteous cry unto the Lord.

[24 : 01] And the ██████████
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██████████ To their peace, they be not the poor, but I am
heart-concinged.

That not so much just one of them can broken be at all.

Amen. Amen. Please turn with me now to 1 Peter chapter 1. We are going to look for a short time this evening at verses 6 and 7.

Let the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold at perishing, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 57] Well it's obvious as you read through this letter that Peter is writing to people who are suffering considerably for their faith. They are experiencing, as he puts it here, many kinds of temptations or testings.

And we believe that some of these would have been in the form of persecutions of different kinds. And as he writes this letter, he draws very much on his own experience as an apostle, as a disciple of Jesus.

You can actually just feel some of the reflections that come from what he experienced himself prior to Christ's death and following, before his resurrection and indeed following that.

But especially during the time that he was following Jesus prior to Christ's crucifixion. And especially how he himself had failed to take account properly of the ways in which Jesus had warned him against being self-confident and not listening to what Jesus was actually saying.

And as he comes here to this letter written, writing to these persecuted suffering people, the Bible. It's basically about how we ought as Christians to actually view sufferings in our experience and what sort of response we are called upon to give to the sufferings that God and his providence brings into our lives.

[28 : 30] All of us have that from time to time to some extent and in different ways. And the Bible is full of counsel and advice and teaching with regard to the sufferings of God's people and how we are to actually find from God the directions to how to actually deal with those and indeed benefit from them.

As we'll see tonight, it's not just a matter of putting up with them, it's not a matter of accepting them, it's a matter of benefiting from them. And as we do so, we learn more and more about God and his faithfulness.

Because what Peter is doing is beginning this letter with a series of points or you might say layers of teaching in these opening verses where he's giving us some really great deep doctrine.

And as he talks there about election according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, he mentions sanctification by the Spirit of God. He mentions the blood, the death of Jesus and how we're called to obedience and sprinkling to come under the provisions of that.

He speaks about grace and peace being multiplied. He talks about God the Father according to his abundant mercy. He's begotten us again to a living hope, a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance that's incorruptible, undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

[30 : 08] Look at the number of points that he packs together in these verses that are in many ways foundational to the Christian life. But it's a reminder to us that doctrine exists, not for itself, not just to pack our minds with the knowledge of that doctrine, but to carry it into our everyday lives and everyday experiences.

And that's what he's doing here. Now these people need this doctrine, they need this teaching from the Apostle that sets out these great facts about salvation and about God and who he is and what he's like.

In order that they'll take that into their experience and apply these great points to themselves. And that's how it is for ourselves as well. You know, we are greatly privileged in our upbringing here in our setting in the island, and I've been for many generations.

Greatly privileged that we have the doctrines of the Bible preached to us, that we can read about them freely in other works of theology or whatever it is. But it's not just to pack our minds with that knowledge.

Everything the Bible gives us by way of teaching theology is in order to apply it practically in our way of life. And while it is great to have such a knowledge of theology or teaching, as indeed we come to have from the Bible and from other works of theology, we always remember the practical end for which we're given that.

[31 : 40] That is to actually apply it to our lives in the world, apply it to our circumstances as we meet them, apply it to the conditions in which God places us in his providence.

So what is he saying here? What's Peter here saying to these people? First of all, he speaks about the present trials through which they're going.

Here he is in verse 7 here saying that the trial of your faith, the ongoing present trial of your faith. In fact, it's trials really.

Literally, it's the trials of your faith, plural, that he's talking about. It's testing, it's different types of circumstances that test their faith, that try them.

As we'll see, he uses imagery in a minute which calls to mind what happens to the likes of silver or gold as it's being refined. The trial of silver, the trial of gold, the heating element applied to it in order to actually bring out eventually its purity.

[32 : 43] And he's using that, as we'll see in a minute by, he's using that to be an illustration for us of how God uses the trials that he brings into the life of his people. And so much follows on how we actually approach these trials, how we accept these, what our response or reaction is to them.

And as we receive them and as we place our trust in God who knows all about these things and can use them. So Peter is drawing our minds here to the various trials.

He calls them manifold trials. He calls them manifold trials. He speaks about the manifold trials that they're going through. The trials of your faith.

The way in which they're going through the different kinds of trial in the life. In verse 6 there, wherein you greatly rejoice, though you are now in heaviness through manifold temptations.

Manifold is the old word for variance. So what he's saying to us here is, it's not so much the number of trials that he's concerned for, it's the variety of trials.

[33 : 54] And as we follow Jesus in the Christian life, the Bible tells us really in different ways that we need to embrace all kinds of trials in the providence of God.

We're not exempt from any trials at all. Because when you look to Jesus himself, the Bible tells us that in Hebrews 4, in the Hebrews, the epistle to the Hebrews, that he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

Why was Jesus tempted in all points like as we are? Why was it that he went through all the trials that you could possibly imagine that the devil could throw at him, that the world could throw at him, so that he might be able to support us and be our support in the trials through which we go?

Why is he not experienced a single trial in your life tonight that's not known by Jesus, that he hasn't experienced in his time on earth? He was not exempt from any of these trials.

A remarkable thing in itself, isn't it? That the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, that he came into this world, and as he came into this world in human form, that's to say, in a true humanity, a reasonable body, a reasonable soul, and a true body, as the catechism puts it, a proper, complete human being.

[35 : 18] That he came not to be exempt from suffering, not to be placed on a pedestal safely away from the worst of suffering that this world could throw at him, or that the devil could throw at him.

He came to be tempted in all points, like as we are, like as you and I are. So whatever your concern, your suffering, your trial is tonight, you can safely bring it to Jesus, from this point of view, that you can safely conclude, he knows what you're going through.

He knows all about it. He has stepped through that trial already. Not only so, but he's overcome that trial. And if you place your hand in his hand, he will take you through that trial as well, and take you ultimately above it.

The manifold temptations, the various temptations from which we're not exempt. And what he's saying is that, wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in sufferings.

You are in heaviness through manifold temptations. And that word heaviness is a word that really teaches us that the temptations, the trials, the difficulties through which they were going, really amount to a species of grief.

[36 : 44] You could say that, another way of translating this would be, you have been put to grief. You have been put in circumstances that grieve you, that really hurt you in your heart, that inwardly you're struggling with.

And again, many Christians probably here will follow that tonight. We all have different circumstances in life. And one of the dangers is that we measure ourselves by what other people are going through, and then conclude if we can't match that up, then we can't be Christians at all.

And that's not a proper way of approaching a Christian life at all. The Lord gives to certain of his people trials which many other people can't experience.

But that's not the point. The point is, as he's saying here, you are in heaviness through these manifold temptations. And for many people, that word heaviness is one that they can follow, whether it's physical or mental or psychological, through losses, through unexpected events.

One of the things that you'll find him saying is, I just feel weighed down. Because these trials were weighing these people down as Peter was writing to them. It was a great weight in their experience.

[38 : 04] They were carrying about this weight. It was like a weight, these trials, these temptations, these difficulties, these challenges. And he's now saying to them, this is, I know what you're going through.

You're being weighed down. And they are, of course, trials very much so. But they are also short-lived.

They might go on for a whole lifetime in the experience of many people. But they're short-lived in comparison to the wonderful eternity that's awaiting God's people.

And that's why Peter here is actually putting side by side the present trials, the grief, the heaviness, the difficulties, the challenges. And they're putting that side by side with this wonderful inheritance that's waiting for God's people.

An inheritance incorruptible. It's undefiled. It does not fade away. It's not subject to change as you find in this life. And it's reserved in heaven for you.

[39 : 13] This is the people who are suffering these trials. The very same people who are going through this time of real heaviness. He's saying it's reserved in heaven for you.

You who are being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, unto the final outcome of your faith.

Now, we're not going into that, but there's a wonderful series of words there. He's saying you are being kept. You're being guarded by God. You're being kept by the power of God.

But then it's through faith. It's not by the power of God without faith on our part. It's not by our faith without the power of God.

It's primarily through the power of God through faith. You want to benefit from your experiences in this life, from your difficulties, from the weights in this life that you go through.

[40 : 15] And it's not enough for you simply to say, well, God will look after that. I'll just leave that with him. But I don't mean to do much about it. Yes, you do.

You need to believe. You need to believe because that's really the essence of believing is trusting in God, trusting his promises, trusting his word. So you approach the trials of your life in faith.

But it's not your own faith itself that gives you the power. It's God who gives you the ability. You're kept by the power of God through faith until finally God brings his people to glory.

And that's why, in keeping with the likes of what Paul writes elsewhere, Peter is saying here these heavy trials, these difficulties are for a short time compared to what's awaiting you in eternity.

I think, for example, of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians in chapter 4, where you find him saying here, the light affliction, which is, but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

[41 : 32] See here is Paul saying, I know that you're going through these weights. Here's Peter saying these weights are something that you're suffering at the moment. This is something that you are actually going through in the present time, the present crisis, the present trials.

But they shall weight awaiting you as well, a different kind of weight. That's Paul's, Paul's, um, word to the Corinthians.

These trials are working for us by the blessing of God, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Isn't that a wonderful fact? Isn't that a wonderful fact? That however heavy our trials in this world may be, the weight of glory is much heavier still, not in terms of burdening you, but in terms of its glory, its magnificence, in terms of it being, it being something that truly is inexpressibly great.

And that is, that is, what awaits the people of God. And that's why the weight of trials cannot be compared, as Paul says to the Romans, to the glory, in us. You put it into the balances, just imagine a set of gigantic balances. And Peter and Paul are together saying, put all your sufferings on one side of it. And down goes the balance like that.

[43 : 10] And then he says, take all the weight of glory that awaits God's people. Put it on the other side, what happens? Well it lifts it up there because the glory far outweighs, far outmeasures whatever sufferings in this life preceded. So that's what he's saying that you are kept by the power of God through faith ready to be revealed in the last time.

But then he says, wherein you greatly rejoice. How can that be? How can anybody rejoice in those sufferings? Well it's not rejoicing in the sufferings as such. I think he's saying you're rejoicing in the things that he's mentioned there in the opening verses. Rejoicing in the fact that they're God's chosen people. Rejoicing in sanctification of the Spirit.

Rejoicing that their portion is obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Rejoicing that grace and peace be multiplied to them. Rejoicing that God is their Father that He has brought them to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus. Rejoicing that the great fact of that inheritance awaits them.

He says, in this state of suffering that you're presently undergoing you greatly rejoice in these other things. Wherein you greatly rejoice.

Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. It's not a contradiction.

[44 : 47] Being a Christian is not about having good feelings though that may very well be part of it. But the world will tell you good feelings really are what you should aim for.

Just feel good about yourself. Just feel good about what happens in life to you. Have that feel good factor. Well, the Christian life certainly has many feelings that make you feel good.

Not because you're good in yourself or me. But because you know the Lord. But then that's not what the Christian life is about primarily. It's not about feeling good about yourself or anything else.

Or having good feelings. It's not good feelings that regulate your mind and your soul. It's the truth of God. And when you find very often that your feelings will lead you astray and your own conclusions might lead you astray.

What do you do? You come back to the Word of God. You come back to these great facts. These great truths that Peter is laying out as a foundation for them there. Truth is what regulates your soul.

[46 : 00] You know, you find that question asked very often nowadays. How can you tell me about a God of love when there is so much suffering in the world?

How can a God of love bring his people sometimes, even those who trust in him, so much suffering? Isn't there something wrong with that? That you can say on the one hand God is a God of love and yet on the other hand he presides over such suffering.

Well, this is how C.S. Lewis answered that question. The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word love.

That's where the world is today. To a great extent, the word love has taken on that triviality. And Lewis is saying as long as we give a trivial meaning to the word love, this is our conclusion.

To look on things as if man were the centre of them. Man is not the centre. Man does not exist for the sake of man. Man does not exist for his own sake.

[47 : 16] Thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created. We were made not primarily that we may love God, though we were made for that too.

But that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the divine love may rest well pleased. That's a great statement which takes a while just to sink in.

We were made for God. We were made to love God. but we were also made for God's love to rest and find rest in us as redeemed people.

And that's where you find the love of God as it's described in the scripture. It's not a trivial thing. It's not love as defined by human beings. It's not love as defined in the present day mantra love is love just to cover all kinds of deviant behaviours.

love is only love as God defines it. And as God defines it and as you and I are true to that definition then you will certainly find that there's nothing like love.

[48 : 32] That love is the chief and that love is something which corresponds to the love of God himself. So these present trials that they're going through they're various trials there's an abundance of them.

They're painful trials they're being put to grief they're being weighed down under the weight of it and yet at the same time they can rejoice in the great truths of God that he has laid out for them though presently this is their experience of trial and suffering.

But what about the purpose of those trials? The present trials what about the purpose of those present trials? What does he say in verse 7 especially?

That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Now he's saying here if necessary where he's saying if need be in verse 6 and if there doesn't mean perhaps it means see it is the case that they are necessary.

[49 : 52] What he's saying is these trials are not accidental they're not something that's come about really loosely under the governance of God they're appointed by him they're governed by him they're necessary trials he's putting it here why are they necessary?

How can trials be necessary? Frequent question we ask in our own experience why is this suffering? Why am I suffering this when I don't see the same thing in the light of other people?

And why does my suffering have to be so deep? Why does it have to be so much more than what I see others going through? I'm just saying these are things which all of us sometimes will say why is it so hard?

Why do Christians have to go through so much when they're the beloved people of God? Well it's so that the outcome among other things it's so that the outcome will be the praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ praise to him primarily but praise also in terms of honour and glory to ourselves under the conditions of salvation John Owen great Puritan theologian one of his writings he compares two people going through exactly the same set of sufferings of difficulties of trials the one person is not a believer he doesn't trust in God he doesn't follow the teachings of the Bible but he's going through these sufferings and the same sufferings are being experienced by this other person who is a Christian who trusts in the Lord how does each of them where does suffering fit into the circumstances of these two people well this is how Owen treats it the sufferings in the case of the person who's not a believer who casts away all thought of

God sufferings for him he says are like an executioner just binding the person to be exercised to be executed binding his eyes or putting a hood over him just before he puts him to death whereas on the other hand remember it's the same set of sufferings the same circumstances the other person who trusts in the Lord the sufferings for that person are like a surgeon binding up wounds with a view to final healing see the difference same sufferings different people different outlook different end as well different outcome what is our view of suffering what is our view of trial what is our view of things which causes pain how do we react to providences that cause us hurt that make it difficult that challenge us and the challenge of faith as well how does our response to that is it as Peter is saying here is it that these manifold temptations these various translations the trial of your faith is it precious is it as precious as it is for the person who is coming to refine gold in the fire well that's what he brings in this imagery that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes though it tried with fire might be found unto praise and honour and glory when somebody certainly in the older days when you had a crucible for example a vessel in which something is heated really strongly gold silver to be refined it's heated up as it's heated up in the crucible you get the impurities rising to the top the scum if you like combines with the pure metal until it's burnt off and the purifying process the work of the crucible the heat it brings all that to the surface so it can be removed and you're left with the pure metal with the pure gold with the pure silver whatever it is and Peter's using that illustration so that these people that are suffering as he writes to them will think of themselves during these necessary trials at the moment these present trials as themselves being presently in this crucible of suffering the heat is being applied but he's saying the purpose of it is that the trial of your faith the refining of your faith might ultimately be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of

[54 : 44] Jesus Christ God is burning off the impurities God is concerned to bring about the final purity that final product of glory and praise and honour to Jesus there are many people in the Bible that experienced trials of different kinds but one of the best known I suppose in a way is Job who gave the name to the book of Job that we find in the Old Testament and in Job 23 this is how Job actually expressed himself firstly about his sufferings he said even to this day my complaint is bitter my stroke is heavier than my groaning or that I knew that I might find him that's God of course that I might come even to his seat I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments things have changed dramatically in

Job's life God is no longer known to be God who is close to him has come through sufferings of physical and mental kind and his friends have been no use to him their counsel just has not in any way given him a vision through these terribly difficult times on the left hand where he does work but I cannot find him he hides himself on the right hand and I cannot see him but then you see as you find a few times in Job a wonderful spike of faith rises up from the dark goodness of his soul but he knows the way that I take and when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold my fruit has held his steps his way I have kept and not declined he knows the way that

I take and when he has tried me in other words Job is saying when he has finished his work with me I shall be as gold refined in the fire purified shining for God what a great outcome what a wonderful marvelous vision to look into from the vantage point of presence of things natural to look there are actually some trees and plants in the world known as pyrophytic!

pyrophytic I'm saying pyrophytic trees or plants what does that mean it means it's a biological name for trees and plants that have seed pods that need fire in order to burst them open and the seeds fly out and they begin to plant new plants and there are many places in the world especially more desert places where these plants are found it's not the only place they're found but when you find them in desert places you very often find that their rain doesn't fall for years sometimes and the heat of it is the heat of the place itself is oppressive these plants survive and then you'll find that for some reason fire breaks out and it rampages through that dry arid desert the plants are swallowed up burnt up with the fire but these seed pods begin to burst open and scatter their seeds all over the place they depend upon the fire to actually propagate themselves in order to have more of the same kind of plant and what this is really saying to us is in many ways we depend upon our sufferings in order to bring out the fruit of holiness and righteousness so that

God will be praised in return and that's the successful outcome he's talking about it here that you might be found that the trial of your faith might lead to this might actually result in this result in praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ somebody once wrote about being on holiday and coming to this place where ceramics or glass was being created these wonderful glass objects that you find through experts blowing and forming glass vases and so on well they came to this place and as he was parking the car and walking towards the door into this place this factory they saw a sign there with two arrows on it one arrow pointed upwards the other arrow pointed downwards and the sign actually said workshop in the basement showroom upstairs that's what

[59 : 53] Peter's really saying for God's people this world is workshop time this is where God is busy fashioning them into the final objects they will ultimately be the workshop is here and now these present trials but the showroom is upstairs and the vessels that are purified in this life that are created and experienced these difficulties and trials this refining process when you see them presented in the workshop they sparkle without a defect they bear the image of their maker perfectly and therefore isn't it a great privilege to be fashioned by God difficult though that is at many times with a view to ultimately being in his image perfectly in the showroom of heaven so where tonight is our faith what is our view of suffering how do we approach our trials and challenges would we rather be without them

I'm sure if we're honest and if I'm honest I would say yes at times I'd rather not have it but then we look at the bigger picture we look beyond the present we look on into eternity as God's word opens up at least a glimmer of that to us and saying to us there's your inheritance undefined unfading reserved in heaven for you kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation let's pray Lord our God we give thanks that you take charge of the life of your people in this world and in the world to come and we give thanks that they are in your own hand and we give thanks that in the way in which you fashion your people even through their experience of suffering your word assures us of that final end that they will be placed in heaven to conform to your likeness oh

Lord help us we pray to bear our sufferings in such a way that we realise that they are not the final outcome for us and that this world is not our final resting place but rather preparing us for a better place bless each of us here we pray and any who even tonight have not yet come to place their trust in the Lord to give themselves over to him nor grant that by your spirit even now so you would be drawing such souls to yourself be with us in the remainder of the evening grant to receive our thanks for Jesus sake amen we'll sing in conclusion of psalm 66 psalm number 66 verses 7 to 12 he!

he rule he! O let O let O let O let not the rebellious ones lift up themselves on high ye people bless our God aloud the voice speak of his praise our soul and life who safe preserves our foot from sliding stays for thou did prove and try us Lord as men do silver try brought us into the net and made bands on our loins to lie thou hast caused men ride over our heads and though that we did pass through fire and water yet thou brought us to a wealthy place these verses he ruleth ever by his power he ruleth ever by his heart his eyes the age the sea!

for men of glory we have his ones with doubt and sense of time he keeps on bless the God of earth the voice because his!

[64 : 49] our told in life who simply says our earth from the sky he resists!

for life is true! our God! Christ is Lord how God said who serve to die!

brought us to earth and the midst!

and all have arrived to die!! of! God has God sent!

right over the heads and Lord our feet give us to find a walk to the end the cross and you are worth even!

[66 : 23] Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more Amen