

"The Lord's Encouragement to ALL Believers"

Part 3

1 Peter 1:1-2:10

Introduction: Last week in our study of Peter we were looking at God encouragement to the readers of Peter's letter and in our study, we considered the security of the believer's salvation.

Notice 1 Peter 1:5

The focus in this verse is our completed salvation when we reach perfection. This is guaranteed by the power of Almighty God. In order for us to lose our salvation someone would need to overpower our God and that is impossible.

Now as Peter continues to write he is going to take us into an area where we do not like to go. He is going to teach us about the testing of our faith. I have not encountered anyone over the years that looks forward to testing of any kind. But as believers it is part of our lives as we shall see. As we work our way through the verses before us, we will learn that tests and trials **MUST** come because there are important reasons behind them.

➤ **The Need for Testing**

Notice 1 Peter 1:6a

The rejoicing Peter writes about here is rejoicing in our salvation. Rejoicing that we are part of the elect, we have a living hope, we are set apart by the Spirit, we are washed in the blood and we are kept by the power of God unto salvation. These thoughts bring great joy to our hearts.

But Peter goes on.

Notice 1 Peter 1:6 again.

He begins here by reminding his readers that what they are facing is only for a season. The persecution they were experiencing was temporary. It would one day pass and they would move on.

Application:

What a great reminder for you and me! The trials and the tests of life are only temporary. They last but for a season. Now someone may object by saying, "Sometimes they last until death?" That is true but if we die in the Lord then the sufferings are over for, they do not follow us into our eternal home.

This is why Paul could write the words of Philippians 1:21.

Philippians 1:21

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Let us notice what the Psalmist writes about the death of the saints.

Psalm 116:15

¹⁵ *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

When a believer dies it is a gain. We gain freedom from this world and from the flesh. There will be no more temptation and no more failure. At death, our faith becomes sight.

Getting back to the thought, the trials of life are only for a season.

Notice 1 Peter 1:6 again.

The words "IF NEED BE" are not "IFFY". In other words, Peter is not saying that the testing they were in was possibly needful. He is saying that it was definitely needful. Just as the testing was only for a season, we can also say it was for a REASON. It was all needed in the life of these believers.

Notice the words of an unnamed writer on the words "IF NEED BE":

"Three gracious words! Not one of all my tears has been shed for nothing! Not one stroke of the rod has been unneeded, or that might have been spared! Your heavenly Father loves you too much, and too tenderly, to bestow harsher correction than your case requires! Is it loss of health, or loss of wealth, or loss of beloved friends? Be still! there was a needs be. We are no judges of what that "needs be" is; often through aching hearts we are forced to exclaim, "Your judgments are a great deep!" But God here pledges Himself, that there will not be one unnecessary thorn in the believer's crown of suffering. No burden too heavy will be laid on him; and no sacrifice too great exacted from him. He will "temper the wind to the shorn lamb." Whenever the "need be" has accomplished its end, then the rod is removed—the chastisement suspended—the furnace quenched.

"If need be!" Oh! what a pillow on which to rest your aching head—that there is not a drop in all your bitter cup but what a God of love saw to be absolutely necessary! Will you not trust His heart, even though you cannot trace the mystery of His dealings? Not too curiously prying into the "Why it is?" or "How it is?" but satisfied that "So it is," and, therefore, that all must be well! "Although you say you cannot see Him, yet judgment is before Him, therefore trust in Him!"

Not only is the pain needed but it is also used for our good.

Romans 8:28-29, 35-39

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice 1 Peter 1:6 again.

Sometimes it is the will of God that we come under a heaviness. Sometimes it is thought that a strong Christian will never be grieved in a trial. The idea is that a Christian should be like Superman; though bullets are shot at Superman, they all bounce off of his chest. Yet Peter here tells us that there is a "need be" not only for the various trials, but more especially that there is a "need be" for being grieved itself. God has a purpose not only for the trial but also for the heavy grief we feel in the trial.

Notice 1 Peter 1:7a

These people were in a season of heaviness that was actually a testing of their faith. This was the "NEED BE", that their faith would be tested and tried. Now our faith is not tested because God wants to see how strong our faith is, but it is tested because we are often ignorant of how much faith we have or what kind of faith we have. The test is for us not for the Lord.

Notice the words of Spurgeon:

"Indeed, it is the honor of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, 'I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties'? Who knows whether thou hast any faith? Shall a man say, 'I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than

the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done without it as well as with it? Is this to the honor and praise of thy faith? Dost thou think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to thee any great reward? If so, thou art mightily mistaken."

Now let me borrow your thoughts for a moment. If the heaviness we go through is "TEST" there must be a TEST DESIGNER. When we were in school every test we were given was designed by and given by the teacher. The same is true of the tests which we face in life. God is the Designer, and He is the Teacher. The test did not just happen to come about. It was designed by our God and it is administered by our God. Let us know that the tests and the trials are not for our destruction, but they are for our proving.

Notice 1 Peter 1:7 again.

Just like gold is refined in the fire, so is our faith. When God takes us through the fires it is not to ruin us or to destroy us, but it is to purify our faith. Our faith is more precious than pure gold and our faith is only refined in the furnaces of affliction. God burns away the dross in the furnaces of life. This is God's way. This is not a popular teaching today because people want to hear messages that make them feel good. People would rather be taught that they are sufficient in themselves, but nothing could be further from the Truth. People want to be taught that while they "live right" they shall never experience any heaviness. This kind of teaching is not Biblical.

James 1:2-4

² *My brethren, count it all joy WHEN ye fall into divers temptations;*

³ *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

⁴ *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

Isaiah 43:2-3a

² *WHEN thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

³ *For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:*

In the words of James and the words of Isaiah we read the word "WHEN" not the word "IF". This means that the trials and the furnaces of affliction are going to come. The

trials are not only used for chastening, but they are used for purifying as well. God wants PURE "gold/faith" and the only way to get it pure is to expose it to the heat. Sometimes the furnaces are God's chastening's for His children, and you will know if that is the case. But there are many times when the furnaces are for purification. This is what Peter is writing about.

Notice what Job said in the midst of his testing.

Job 13:15

¹⁵ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Job accepted the furnace he was placed into and he knew the end result.

Job 23:10

¹⁰ But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Submission is so important in the furnace. God watches very closely as we are exposed to the increased heat. He keeps His hand on the thermostat and He knows how much we can take and how long to expose us. If we refuse to submit, he may leave us there longer because He has allowed the furnace to accomplish His will in our lives. It is ultimately to strengthen our faith in Him. We need to know that there is a peace when we surrender to the situation.

I want to share something from the night when Jesus was arrested.

Luke 22:41-44

⁴¹ And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

⁴² Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

⁴³ And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

In these verses we see the struggle in our Lord as He faced the cross which was the will of the Father. Now let us see what Matthew records about what happened after this.

Matthew 26:45-46

⁴⁵ Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

We can see a change. He had reached the place where He was surrendered to the Father's will and the struggle was over.

Let us notice again what James recorded.

James 1:2-4

² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

*⁴ But **let** patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James tells us we are to LET patience have her perfect work. This is a call to surrender.

Notice 1 Peter 1:7 again.

The end of the verse helps us to see what it is that God desires. He wants our faith to be strengthened so that He will be praised, honored and glorified at the appearing of our Lord.

Conclusion:

There is a picture in the Old Testament of how our faith is to glorify God.

Daniel 3:16-20, 23-25, 28

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

¹⁹ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

²⁰ And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

²⁵ He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.