

1 Peter 1:3-5 – Part S

1Pe 1:6 (ESV) **In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

In this passage Peter begins a new section and a new emphasis. It seems that one of the primary reasons why Peter opened this letter the way that he did with talking so much about this salvation that we have is because he knew full well the kind of trials that Christians would be facing. [1 Peter 1:6-9](#) is a section on suffering, but specifically suffering because of our faith in Jesus Christ. There are a lot of people who suffer. Maybe they have a terrible illness, or maybe they were physically hurt in an accident. Maybe they made some really bad financial decisions and now life has become very difficult. I know a young man who is in jail because he made some really unwise decisions. Someone may be suffering because of a tsunami or an earthquake or a hurricane. Those are all really serious and very real forms of suffering, but they are **not** what Peter is addressing in this passage – not at all. This is going through what he calls “**various trials**” so that our personal faith in Christ “**may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**”. This particular passage will address whether or not we as believers are willing to live our lives in such a way so that Christ can be truly honored in our life. If I can say this in a negative way, if the trial does not bring about “**praise and glory and honor**” to Christ, then in reality we have wasted God’s work in our life.

The very first thing that Peter tells us is that God wants us to “**rejoice**” when we have to go through these “**various trials**”. The Greek word for “**rejoice**” is “*agalliao*” and it literally means to jump for joy.¹ It means to be overjoyed, glad, extremely joyful, but it carries the idea of expressing that joy outwardly.² Dr. Zodhiates says that it means to show one's joy by leaping and skipping denoting excessive or ecstatic joy and delight.³ If I can say it a different way, and I think this is where we should be headed, the goal is to learn not to complain about every little thing that does not go our way, and rather learn to find a way to honor God in the trial. Life can become very difficult and trying at times, and when it does, that is the exact time when God wants us to learn how to cast our every care on Him for we know that He cares for us. Things in life break down, malfunction, and go wrong, and if we are not careful, what breaks may break us if we have not learned how to rejoice in our trials.

So, rather than complaining, grumbling, and becoming irritable and hard to get along with, we find a way to rejoice in the God of creation and eternity who has given us eternal life and is sovereign over all things. It is not the idea that we rejoice because of the trial, but simply that we know our God and that allows us to rejoice in spite of the trial. This is a present tense verb which means that it is something that should always be ongoing in our life, no matter the magnitude or intensity of the trials itself. It is also in the middle voice which means that we personally are being impacted by our rejoicing.

Please notice that Peter says “**in this you greatly rejoice**”. The “**this**” is pointing back to the great salvation that he has addressed in [1 Peter 1:1-5](#), and not the specific trials that he is going to address. It is not like we are spiritual orphans just left to be ravaged by the world – not at all. To the contrary, we

are the ones who will ultimately be victorious. Obviously, there are specific passages that speak about actually rejoicing when trials that we are facing actually afflict and weaken us. For example, [James 1:2-3](#) says,

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.**

[1 Peter 4:12 -17](#) says,

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?**

Just so that we do not lose perspective on the idea of “**trials**” in our life, just listen to some of the things that Peter says about both them and the endurance that it requires when you are going through them. For instance, he says in [1 Peter 1:13](#) that we are to “**gird up the loins of our mind**”. If I can say that in another way, we have to think strong, we have to spiritually exercise our heart and mind to stay focused on what is truly important in life. It does not take any effort to become totally distracted and enamored by this world and what it offers – no effort whatsoever. [1 Peter 2:19-21](#) says,

1Pe 2:19 (NKJV) **For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

[1 Peter 2:23](#) is my favorite verse in this letter and one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture.

1Pe 2:23 (NKJV) **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**

[1 Peter 3:9](#) says,

1Pe 3:9 (NKJV) **not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.**

[1 Peter 3:14-17](#) says,

1Pe 3:14 (NKJV) **But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are* blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers,**

those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

1 Peter 4:1 says,

1Pe 4:1 (NKJV) Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

1 Peter 4:19 says,

1Pe 4:19 (NKJV) Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to *Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

If we are ever going to benefit from these kinds of verses in our life, then we have to think strong, think biblically. No wonder Peter says the following in **1 Peter 5:8-11**,

1Pe 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*. ¹¹ To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Please remember where we actually started in that a divine trial is one of the primary tools that God uses in our life to bring glory to His name and to His person. Obviously, if we are more interested in ourselves and our personal desires and all that we want to get out of life, then I doubt very seriously that the trials we face will be too welcome in our life. If I am not able to see and not able to understand that God is actually using the trial in my life, then the trial will become very difficult and very stressful to me personally. I will find myself wanting to do whatever I have to do to get out from under the trial. Listen very carefully. If we do not allow God to use His ordained trials in our life to conform us more and more to the image of Christ, then He will simply raise up another trial to accomplish the same thing. If we fail the test, we just have to take another one.

Now, if you are like me, it seems like an oxymoron to actually be rejoicing when going through something very difficult and trying in our life. The reason, however, that we should be able to “rejoice” is because we understand what God is actually wanting to accomplish in our life. Every trial is designed by God to help conform an area of our life to be like that of Christ, and even though it may be difficult and uncomfortable, we should have the right perspective on the trial. We know that God is always doing the very best for our life, even though we may not actually see how it is working for our good and His glory. So, the first thing that Peter wants us to do is to make sure that we have the right perspective on the trials because that is half the battle. Having the right perspective provides a great measure of spiritual strength that will help us to get through a divinely ordained trial. How can we know that we do NOT have the correct perspective? Well, it is simple. We find ourselves always complaining and being ill-tempered about the difficulties. We find ourselves becoming irritable, grumpy, fault-finding, whining, criticizing. Those are the evidences that we do not really have God’s perspective on His work in our life. The more we complain, the less we actually understand about God and divinely ordained trials.

So, what does Peter mean when he says “**now for a little while**”? That English phrase is just one word in the Greek language – “*oligos*” meaning just for a short time. It is something that is intended to have a short duration. This is a great encouragement simply because it is not like God just wants to beat us down or to make us just endure something unmercifully for a long time – not at all. I remember when I had to physically discipline my children when they were young. The discipline was strong, but not long, and that is exactly what this particular word is indicating to us. We can be assured that when God does bring about a trial in our life that it will get our attention and that its effect will be to cause us to change. I am actually amazed after studying this passage and the other places in Peter that talk about these trials that we do not actually have more trials than we do. In v7, Peter says that we are actually being “**tested**”. The test is not so that God can know what level of faith and endurance we have, but so that we can know. Most of time we believe that we are stronger in the Lord that we probably are, so very often the trial is simply God’s way of helping us to see where we really are spiritually so that we can make the adjustments necessary to become all that He desires. This Greek word “*oligos*” should actually be a great encouragement to us simply because it helps us to understand that God is not going to be overbearing in our life, but will simply do what He needs to do to get us to respond properly to His work in our life. As a Christian, we can take comfort that our God is a God of mercy, a God of kindness, compassion, and forbearance.

Now, I want you to notice a very important statement that Peter makes in v6 when he uses the phrase “**if necessary**”. I am sure that none of us would ever think that we needed a very difficult trial in our life. We are so confident that we just know that we can make the spiritual adjustments needed so that God can forego taking us through a trial. This word for “**necessary**” is the little Greek word “*dei*” which is considered by most Greek scholars to be the strongest verb in the New Testament, and very often it is translated as “**must**”. For instance, Jesus used this word in [John 3](#) when He told Nicodemus “**you must be born again**”. I think that the ISV translates it the best when it says,

1Pe 1:6 (ISV) **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you have to suffer various kinds of trials,**

None of the other translations seem to bring out this strong “**must**” aspect of the word “*dei*”. The ISV simply says “**you have to...**” The word means that it is something that is necessary as if it is binding. The trial is something that must happen in our life in order to achieve the specific results and bring about the specific changes that God wants to bring about in our life.⁴ God is always concerned that we are becoming more and more like Christ and that His character and His grace is being reflected by our life. What good does it do to call ourselves Christians, but never reflect Christ, never respond to life in the way that God wants us to respond? The source of this spiritual demand and necessity on our life is the will of God.⁵ The trial is very often something that has to happen when we are unresponsive to God’s work in our life. It is something that God deems to be absolutely necessary to take place in our life, and once that happens, this “**trial**” that God will bring about is inevitable, unavoidable, inescapable. It will happen. What Peter will tell us is that God will use “**various**” kinds of trials to bring about His work in our life – numerous trials, assorted trials, different kinds of trials, many trials – whatever it takes.

Let us just suppose that God has been working to make some spiritual corrections in our life, but for whatever reason we have just ignored His deeper work in us and have simply been unresponsive. We become overly casual and inattentive to our Christian life. We become satisfied with Christian

mediocrity and spiritual laziness. We find all of the reasons why we are exempt from being faithful and being fully committed to Christ. This spiritual “lukewarmness” is the curse of this church age, and none of us is exempt from it. It is like we often have the impression that we are the exception and that we do not need God’s more profound work in our life, or put another way, that we have already been conformed to the image of Christ enough. Well, if that is the case, then there is a very good chance that God is going to take us through “**various trials**” so that He can get our attention in those particular areas of our life that He has been dealing with us about. What is important, however, about how this small word is generally translated as “**if necessary**” is that that translation brings out the simple fact that if we are responsive to God’s work in our life, there simply may be no need for God to have to deal with us. Being spiritually stubborn with God is not a good thing, but when we consistently respond to God’s deeper work, the trials may be much less intense and much fewer in number. In reality, if we are truly walking with God and having meaningful fellowship with Him, then our actual trials should be a source of great encouragement to us simply because we recognize that God is working deeply in our life.

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, 907.

² Logos, Lexham Theological Wordbook, *agalliao*, ep.

³ Zodhiates, 64.

⁴ Vines, 765-766.

⁵ Harris, *dei*, ep.

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