

## 1 Peter 1:3-5 – Part T

1Pe 1:6 (ESV) **In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,** <sup>7</sup> **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.** <sup>8</sup> **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,** <sup>9</sup> **obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

We want to continue with our study of this passage and specifically what it means to be “**grieved by various trials**”. Obviously, that does not sound inviting or exciting, but it is critical to appreciate that it is a normal function in the Christian life. In the process of going through “**various trials**”, we do not want to lose sight of the fact that Peter indicates in v7 that the actual trials may at times be what he calls “**tested by fire**” and in [1 Peter 4:12](#) he says that may be “**fiery trials**”. So, some of them, as we will see, may at times be somewhat severe, but certainly that is not always necessary. Being “**tested by fire**” is not intended to be normative for the Christian life. The actual word for “**trials**” – “*peirasmois*” – is only used 11 times in the New Testament, so it is not a subject that is often addressed. It is only used once in the four gospels and only once in Acts, and no more than twice in any other New Testament letter. Other New Testament words that are similar, but not the same, are the words “**testing(s)**”, “**persecutions**”, or “**temptation(s)**”. The point in that is that there is no major teaching or doctrinal exposition on this particular word “**trials**”. Now, before we get too far in this portion of the study, I want to identify that there are four (4) specific kinds of trials, and three of them are NOT what Peter is addressing here in our passage.

The first type of trial is what we want to call “God-ordained trials”. As we will see in just a moment, a God-ordained trial is designed to have a very beneficial purpose in the believer’s life. It will eventually bring glory, honor, and praise to Christ, it will draw the believer closer to Christ, and it will cause the believer to have a deeper trust in God, to eventually trust Him unconditionally. This is the kind of trial that Peter is speaking about in our passage.

The second type of trial is what we want to call a “Satan stimulated trial”, or maybe a demonic induced trial. The trial normally begins with simple temptations with which the believer is enticed. This kind of trial always has a destructive purpose to it. Based on how and whether or not we actually respond to the temptations, they can become quite frequent. Because demonic influence is based on deception, these temptations will be very deceptive initially, but very blatant eventually. In other words, the more that we yield to the temptation, the stronger the temptation becomes and the more difficult it will be to resist.

The third type of trial is what we want to call a self-inflicted trial. It is a trial that is completely unnecessary, but one that very often happens because a believer is spiritually weak or lazy and simply does not have a focused and resolute commitment to Christ, to His eternal values, and to His church. Too often a believer may just not use good judgment or they may deliberately disobey God’s Word. There are way too many reasons or scenarios to even discuss, but suffice it to say that what often happens is that we actually blame God for the trial, not appreciating that we were the ones who actually created the trial.

The fourth type of trial is what we want to call a natural trial. These are the tragedies that are not anyone's fault. It could be a hurricane, a tornado, an earthquake, or some other kind of natural disaster like a forest fire or mudslide in which people lose all that they have. It may be an automobile accident in which someone else is clearly at fault, but you suffer the major consequences. It could be cancer, or some kind of debilitating disease like ALS. These kind of trials are unavoidable, but should be considered as just a normal part of life. We have no answers for why seemingly bad things very often happen to really precious individuals. For the most part there is not much we can do to prevent them from happening.

So, the first element that we want to address is that each of the God-ordained trials of [1 Peter 1:6](#) that we may have to face have a very specific God-ordained purpose for our life. I think that we could correctly say that with these kinds of trials that **God has targeted a specific area of our life to address**. It is imperative that we see that as a very good thing. Peter refers to this purpose in v7 as the “**genuineness of your faith**”. The Amplified Bible seems to capture the idea the best when it says of that phrase “**so that the genuineness of your faith may be tested**”. The idea is that when God determines to test our faith, it is to show and demonstrate that our faith in Him is genuine and that the trials will not destroy a person's faith, but rather prove and validate it. Obviously, that is not the only purpose, but it is the primary purpose. In fact, just to strengthen this idea, the actual definition of the word “**trials**” is that God-ordained trials always have a beneficial purpose and effect.<sup>1</sup> It means to put someone to a test, to try them. So, when God is the agent and cause of the trial, it is always for the purpose of proving the believer, but never in a way that causes them to fall or fail in their life. If the enemy is the one who is tempting, and he does that quite often, it is always for the purpose of causing that person to fall and to fail in their life.<sup>2</sup> Generally, God-ordained trials are focused on developing a person's character in order to create in them the character of Christ, but when Satan is involved in the test, his goal is to destroy the person's character. He knows that it only takes one bad decision or just a moment of spiritual impropriety or infidelity to actually do that.

At times the “**trial**” may be to simply strengthen or correct some area of our life that has gotten out of spiritual balance through either spiritual carelessness or disobedience. I would assume that this is very often the case. This is generally common to every Christian no matter where they may be in their spiritual walk. No one has arrived, and everyone needs meaningful spiritual adjustments at various times. Obviously, the more responsive we are to God's corrections, the less often and the less severe will be the trials. In fact, trials are a very good way for us to “hear” God actually speak to our life about what He wants to change in us, so we need to be listening when we sense that we are actually going through a God-ordained trial. I keep using the phrase “God-ordained trial” simply to reinforce that we do not want to confuse these specific kinds of trials with the ones that are clearly attributed to other factors. I have always believed and always taught that it does not seem that God just wants to put believers through trials. We have previously seen in v6 that the trials are only “**if necessary**”. Here is what I believe, and it is just an assumption on my part, but normally, and this is very important, God will first give us a chance to “**self-correct**”. It is the opposite of the idea that we if fail that God immediately disciplines, or that if we sin, God immediately disciplines. If that were the case, none of us could survive.

We must remember that the very character of God is that He is longsuffering, patient, forgiving, and forbearing. [Romans 15:5](#) calls Him the “**God of patience and comfort**”. He does not have a quick

trigger and is not short-tempered or have a short-fuse when we fail. So, when our life begins to get out of spiritual balance, the Holy Spirit will deal with us to help get our attention. He may do it through His Word, maybe our family or friends, often through our circumstances, and even our enemies at times. He creates a kind of **uneasy conviction** in our heart that **gently draws** us to Himself so that we can self-correct. It really is a very gracious process and one that I suspect is not always appreciated as much as it should be appreciated. [Romans 2:4](#) says it this way,

**Ro 2:4 (NKJV) Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

In fact, it seems that because God is often so forbearing with us and so longsuffering when we do fail and disobey Him, that we can actually reach a place where we may begin to take His patience for granted, almost expect it.

Another reason that we may periodically have to go through a particular God-ordained trial is to help develop “**perseverance**” in our life. [Romans 5:3-4](#) says this about “**perseverance**”,

**Ro 5:3 (NKJV) And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

When a believer goes through “**tribulations**”, what God says here is that the intense trial produces something in them – it “**produces perseverance**” in their life. We know that the nature of these kinds of severe trials is both physical and emotional, and they are not very easy to bear. It is in part because of these “**tribulations**” that the seed that is mentioned in the Parable of the Sower does not actually take root.<sup>3</sup> [Matthew 13:21](#) says,

**Mt 13:21 (NKJV) yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.**

The Greek word for “**produces**” in [Romans 5:3](#) is “*katergazomai*” and it means to fully accomplish something.<sup>4</sup> It starts it, it finishes it. When the prefix “*kata*” (down) is added to the verb, it intensifies the verb, it makes it stronger. The verb form of this word is “*ergazomai*” and simply means to work, but when the prefix “*kata*”, or down is added it means to work down, or in our vernacular to do a deep work.

So, this is a very intense work in the believer that brings about God’s intended result. It carries out its work until it is finished.<sup>5</sup> The actual emphasis of the word is on the end result rather than on the actual work itself.<sup>6</sup> Generally, tribulation and persecution create the deepest work of God in a person that is possible, an eventually bring God the greatest glory. I have watched videos of ISIS stomping and kicking babies in front of their parents to get them to deny Christ, but they would not. Their children were martyred and eventually they were martyred, but they remained faithful to Christ. So, it should be evident from a passage like [Romans 5:3-4](#), that God’s outworking in our Christian life may at times be very costly and very difficult. It may by its very nature be very challenging, quite severe, and extremely stressful. We have said it often, but there is no such thing as a no-cost Christianity. If our Christian life does not cost us something, then in reality it most likely does not mean as much to us.

The problem that exists in the spiritual climate in which we live is that we have been so blessed as a nation and so removed from tribulation that these kinds of strong biblical words have great difficulty taking hold in our mind. It is generally very difficult to appreciate something that we have never

experienced. Recently I received some pictures of the latest bombing at Pastor Javid's church in Lahore, Pakistan. The picture was utterly horrific and showed bodies that had been blown up by the bomb. There were arms and legs lying everywhere that had been completely removed from people's bodies. When I saw the pictures, it was very difficult for me personally to relate to that kind of trauma and tribulation simply because I have never experienced it. However, in some parts of the world, it is very normal and is solely related to the fact that people are believers. When I think of Pastor Javid, I am reminded that the very reason that each of the 26 believers were killed in this latest attack is because they were being faithful to God's work in their life. Their local church is the only place that they are attacked, yet they are still more than willing to identify with Christ every time the church doors open. They continue to fill their building with people week after week after week, even though they know there is always the possibility that they may not leave alive.

Do you know what is lacking in the lives of many professing believers today? It is simple. They have no "**perseverance**", they have no "**endurance**" in their spiritual life. Almost anything can drop them out of the spiritual race. Many Christians seem much more committed to those things that are not eternal than they are to those things that are eternal. Everything has to be convenient for them, everything has to fit into their lifestyle, everything has to fit into their schedule, and everything has to fit into their personal preferences. Now, my purpose in even addressing what is often a very uncomfortable subject for many is not to beg or even implore someone personally to be a faithful Christian. Rather, the purpose is to remind all of us, myself certainly included, that generally when God has to bring in very strong and difficult trials into our life, it is probably not because we were doing great, but rather because we had become negligent of allowing Him to be the priority of our life. If we continue to make excuses for a lack of personal faithfulness to Him, it seems apparent that God will eventually do whatever He has to do to remove those excuses.

The word here for "**tribulations**" is actually a stronger word than "**trials**". In fact, a good number of the translations (ESV, AMP, NIV, ISV, RSV) actually use the word "**suffering**". Obviously, this word is referring to a very severe trial. At a personal level in 46 years of being a Christian, I have never experienced "**tribulations**" or "**suffering**". The word means to be afflicted, to be in anguish, to be persecuted, and to be in great distress because of our faith.<sup>7</sup> Most of the times when this particular word is used in the New Testament, it is speaking specifically of the persecution that comes from opposition to a person's Christian faith. We hear of persecution all the time and how Christians are being beaten and their heads removed. Many are as described in [Hebrews 11](#) and are left destitute, removed from their homeland, and many are being martyred for their faith in Christ. That is this word, and it is very severe. I love and take great comfort in what [Romans 8:35](#) says,

Ro 8:35 (NKJV) **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

"**Perseverance**" simply means endurance. It is the Greek word "*hupomone*" which means to stay under. The difficult part of this word is understanding that it primarily refers to the kind of endurance that is only developed through strong trials and testings. [James 1:2-4](#) states it this way,

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,** <sup>3</sup> **knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience** (*hupomone - endurance*). <sup>4</sup> **But let patience** (*hupomone - endurance*) **have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

In [Colossians 1:11](#), Paul prayed the following for the believers,

Col 1:11 (NKJV) **strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience** (*hupomone - endurance*) **and longsuffering with joy;**

[Hebrews 10:35-36](#) sort of summarize this for us when it says,

Heb 10:35 (NKJV) **Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.** <sup>36</sup> **For you have need of endurance** (*hupomone*), **so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:**

We need “**endurance**” so that we will be continually inclined to do what we know to be “**the will of God**” for our life. We have to be tested, we have to be tried. There is no escaping this spiritual reality in the life of a committed believer.

Next week we will address the final issue of allowing these trials to bring honor and glory to Christ. That is the pinnacle reason to develop endurance in our life, so that in God’s sovereign timing Christ will be honored in our life.

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Strong, 1303.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 1135.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, *thlipsis*, ep.

<sup>4</sup> Strong, 1178.

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, 849.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, *katergazomai*, ep.

<sup>7</sup> Strong, 1141.

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