

Trials and Temptations

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Preacher: Peter Adam

- [0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning, which you'll find in the New Testament in Peter's first letter. If you have one of the blue visitor's Bibles, that's page 1014.
- If not, it's near the end of your New Testament, after Hebrews and James and before 2 Peter. And we're reading in chapter 1 and the first half of the chapter, down to verse 13.
- So it was 1 Peter at chapter 1 and verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.
- According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with his blood.
- May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- [1 : 1 6] To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. Kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- In this you rejoice. Though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire.
- So that you may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 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. Obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully. Inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.
- [2 : 3 2] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you. In the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.
- Things into which angels long to look. Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Amen. And may God bless to us this word. Well, it's a great delight to be with you this morning.
- Thank you so much, Willie, for your invitation to speak. My father's family left Glasgow in 1852 to go to sunny Australia, to Melbourne, and we've been there ever since, and we enjoy the sunshine.

Now look around, there might be some relatives here. If you look a bit like me, we might be relatives. Be warned.

[3 : 42] Now God has given us, most of us, two ears. And the reason God has given us two ears is that we might listen to sermons for ourselves with one ear, and listen to the sermon for somebody else with the other ear.

Because I find that God speaks to me when I hear sermons, even when I preach them myself, miraculously enough. But also somebody will ask me a question the next week or two, and I think, well, I heard a sermon about that recently.

What did the preacher say? And it comes back to my mind, and I think, thank you, God, for telling me that last Sunday, so I can tell this person today.

So let's pray that God will help us to hear for ourselves and also help us to hear for others. Let's pray.

God, our gracious Heavenly Father, by the power of your Spirit, bring your words home to us for ourselves. And bring your words home to us for the sake of others for whom we pray and to whom we speak.

[5 : 03] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I hope you listen to those words from 1 Peter. I'm going to be preaching from verse 3 to eventually verse 13.

And verse 3 begins, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been born again by the work of God. Jesus tells us in John chapter 3 that we're born again to eternal life.

Peter puts it slightly differently here in 1 Peter chapter 1. He says, We are born again to a living hope.

If you're not born again, you won't have a living hope. You'll either have black despair or dead delusions.

[6 : 19] And I hear dead delusions every time I go to a funeral. People say afterwards, Well, you know, he's playing golf in the great golf course in the sky. I think that's wildly improbable myself.

See, what people do is use science to disprove Christianity, but then believe the most ridiculous ideas. One I heard recently was, it was after the death of a fireman.

Well, he'd be busy in hell putting out fires for eternity. Well, I guess you couldn't say he'd be putting out fires in heaven. So they said he'd be putting out fires in hell.

Well, it'll take a long time to do that, won't it? What a stupid idea. Putting out fires for eternity. I can't believe it.

For without being born again to a living hope, we are stuck with black despair or dead delusion. But we have been born again to a living hope.

[7 : 30] Peter says we're born again by God's great mercy. That is God's eternal character and his eternal decision to have mercy on us. He says we're born again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

That is, by God's special event in the created world in human history. So when God raised Jesus from the dead, he not only accepted his sacrifice, raised his son from the dead, and by promise raised every man, woman and child who will ever live to life again.

But he also raised us to newness of life. raised us to a living hope. You've been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And Peter says, next verse 4, into an inheritance, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Well, in the Old Testament, the inheritance meant the land, the promised land.

That land today, which is not in the best of conditions, is it? But the promised land, the inheritance for believers in Jesus Christ, is not an earthly land, but a heavenly land.

[8 : 45] It is to be in God's place, in God's presence, with God's people forever. That is our inheritance. in God's place, in God's presence, with God's people forever.

That is your living hope. That is our living hope. Imperishable, it will last forever. Unfiled, it will never decay.

Unfading, it will never lose its splendor, its glory for all eternity. That is our living hope.

Now, I come from a non-Christian family, and I was converted at the age of 16, at school. And I can remember, after I was converted, I decided that I would focus my attention, my attention entirely, on the past, that is on Jesus' death and resurrection.

There was so much in the Bible that excited me. All those Old Testament stories, I loved the ripping yarns of the Old Testament, people getting lots of frogs and plagues and things like that, and I loved the story of Jesus' miracles and Jesus' teaching and Jesus' death and his mighty resurrection and ascension and coming of the Spirit.

[10 : 10] I decided it would be enough for me to live as a Christian to focus on the past, to look back to the glories, the sufferings and glories of Christ in the past.

And then I found myself preaching on 1 Peter, as happens occasionally, and I got to verse 13 of chapter 1, where I was instructed by God, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I thought, I don't need that. I don't need eternal reward. I don't need the threat of eternal punishment. If I just think about the past, about the coming, the first coming of the Lord Jesus, that'll be enough.

Silly me. How ridiculous to set aside what God has promised to give me. To think I don't need a living hope in the return of Jesus Christ.

Please don't be as foolish as I was. Learn with me to set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 20] And I have learnt over the years that without that living hope, without that future hope, I easily become despondent and easily give up.

You've been born again to a living hope. It makes sense. Verse 3, so therefore set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I have two dogs, Beatrice, who's a Spoodle, that's a Spaniel and Poodle, and Bertie, who's a Chihuahua Maltese cross. They're both mixed dogs.

They're both, you know, crossbreeds, so they're a bit confused sometimes about who they are. But anyway, they're happy little dogs. And let me tell you, they live their life with a living hope.

They spend their whole day hoping, hoping for food, always ear cocked, ready to hear the fridge opened or the cupboard opened, always hoping for a walk.

[12 : 25] The moment the lead is brought out, they're there. they do hope rather better than I do, as a matter of fact. They live all day in hope and they wake up in hope of breakfast.

What a wonderful way to live, full of hope, just how we should be living on more substantial things than hoping for breakfast and walks, though they are enjoyable, I must admit.

That is, our breakfasts are enjoyable and their breakfasts are enjoyable in a different kind of way. God provided a living hope because you need it.

We're created for a living hope. We're saved for a living hope. We need a living hope. God has given us a living hope.

This, of course, is so countercultural, isn't it? The world around us dismisses us as those who are looking for a pie in the sky when you die. The world around us says, well, of course, you Christians, you're so heavenly minded, you're of no earthly use at all.

- [13 : 47] If only they'd open their eyes. They'd see that the only people who are of earthly use are those who are heavenly minded. But we are too often, as C.S. Lewis pointed out, like little children who've been promised a day at the beach, choosing instead to stay at home and make mud pies.

what do you need? You need living hope.

As persecuted Christians today need living hope, don't they? If you're, just think of the man or woman today who is facing facing death because they're a believer, what would you say to them?

Well, don't worry, you're not going to live for long. What would you say? Would you say, well, you can at least hope your death will be painless? No, you'd say, you have a living hope, an inheritance, imperishable, undefiled and unfading.

You have a future with God and you'll see him at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll say, the Lord Jesus is coming today to take you to his heavenly father. He is the way, the truth and the life.

- [15 : 22] No one comes to the father but by him. But today, you will be taken by Jesus Christ to your heavenly father. That's a living hope, isn't it? They have no other hope but they have that living hope.

Adoniram Judson who was a pioneer missionary to Burma, now called Myanmar of course, was one day threatened by his people who captured him with death and they mocked him.

They said, well, you know, what does your future look like now? I love his reply. The future is as bright as the promises of God. What a great way to die.

Could you say with him, my future is as bright as the promises of God? Not a gloomy future but a bright future. Bright with God's promises. Bright because it is a living hope.

not a dead dream. And Peter tells us what it's like to undergo trials of various kinds when we have a living hope.

- [16 : 35] He says, look at verse 6, well, in this you rejoice though thou for a little while if necessary you've been grieved by various trials. So there's grief when we undergo trials or temptations.

But then he says in verse 7 that this is so that the tested genuineness of your faith that is God sends us trials and temptations to test the genuineness of our faith.

That is to prove the genuineness of our faith. To show that it is genuine faith. Often when trials come we think what have I done wrong? What mistake did I make?

Why is God punishing me? We should be thinking no, God has sent this trial that he might prove the endurance, the stability, the strength of my faith.

That's the wonderful thing in the book of Job in the Old Testament isn't it? You read the book and you see Job undergoing all these dreadful trials. But when you read the first chapters you know what's going on.

- [17 : 42] Because God boasts about Job. Have you considered my servant Job? And the trials are to prove to Satan that Job will be a man of faith and faithfulness.

God is trusting God. God is trusting God. One thing can be certain.

God is trusting Job. Job may complain. He does for about 40 chapters. He complains. But despite his pain and despite his complaints, God is trusting him.

And God's trust is vindicated. it. Job's faith is proved to be genuine. And indeed, Job's faith is strengthened by his trials.

Well, I could ask you a question. I could say, just think back over your life. When have you grown most as a believer?

[18 : 59] would you say in easy times or in difficult times? I'd certainly say in trials and temptations and disappointments and times of great grief.

And if you've got an hour or two after the service, I could tell you all about it. I'm never particularly cheerful at the time, despite James' instruction, count it all joy when you meet various trials.

No, I can never manage it at the time. But 20 years later, I look back and think, that was a good time. That was a kind gift of God. and how much that's helped me to help others who are going through trials and temptations.

Imagine you've gone to your GP and you said, look, I'm really troubled by lots of trials in my life. And your GP is sympathetic and kind with her or his time.

And she says, well, I've diagnosed the problem, dear. What you need is more what? What you need is more can you imagine what I was going to say?

[20 : 35] You need more living hope. That's what you need. And how wonderful that God has provided living hope through his mercy and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I read on the newspaper in Australia last year, I think it was, that a woman in Queensland had taken part in a marathon, the kind of thing I often do before breakfast myself.

Anyway, she was feeling a bit sort of feverish or something, not so strong, so she thought she'd run a half marathon rather than a full marathon, a bit wimpish I think, but anyway. So she ran a half marathon and then there was an exit point where you left the marathon because you weren't going to run a full marathon, but she took the wrong turning by mistake and ran the whole marathon and won it by mistake.

Isn't that good? Wouldn't you like to have done that, won a marathon by mistake? Oh, I've won a marathon. When I look at Christians in Australia, I think most Christians are actually running the wrong marathon.

Most Christians in Australia run a happiness marathon rather than a holiness marathon. To run a happiness marathon is to think all the time, am I happy?

[21 : 57] you're having a good year? Yes, no troubles. How's your year going? Really well, no difficulties. I'm happy, I'm really happy.

How's your life? Really good. No dark clouds on the horizon. All going really well. happy. How's your year going?

I'm running a holiness marathon. By God's kindness, I thank him for my trials. Because he is proving and improving the genuineness of my faith.

See, the happiness, the happiness marathon says, God loves me, he's taken away all my trials. The person on the holiness marathon says, God loves me in the midst of the trials.

He has sent me and through which he sustains me. You see, if you ask God to increase your love for fellow believers, God will send a really unpleasant fellow believer into your life.

[23 : 24] So your love can increase. Don't look around the room at the person you're thinking of, please. And if you ask God to strengthen your faith, how will he do that?

by sending just the right trial to prove the genuineness of your faith. Well, the mathematics is very simple.

Here it is. The more hope you have, more living hope, the less grief you have in your trials, the more praise you have and the more joy you have.

more hope, less grief, more praise, more joy. Here's the other formula.

Less hope, more grief, less praise, less joy. more than the other things. Well, we all meet various trials, various temptations, various tests, don't we?

[24 : 38] In our own private lives, we're often tried and tested and tempted as Christians. We may be tried or tempted or tested in our work situation.

We may feel, as I certainly do, that in a decaying and disintegrating society, we face great trials and temptations and tests. You may be, your marriage may be undergoing a time of trial or testing or temptation.

Your church may feel that it's undergoing trials and temptations and tests. You may think, what did we do wrong?

Well, but what God is doing is strengthening your faith. And faith, Peter tells us, is even more precious than gold that perishes though it's tested by fire.

And Peter says that when our faith is tested, it may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And Peter says that though we haven't seen him, we still love him and we believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

[25 : 52] Is that the life you want? Then keep alive your living hope.

Well, I wonder what area of your life you would change this week if you decided to live this week full of the living hope into which you've been born again.

I wonder what area of your life would change if you decided to live in the light of your living hope this week. How would it change your prayers?

How would it change your priorities? life? How would a living hope change your fears? Your life?

Your ministry? Your attitude? you've no idea the answer to that question.

[27 : 06] My advice is read 1 Peter because it'll tell you exactly what areas of life you need to change if your life is full of living hope. And please notice too that Peter reminds us in verses 10 and 11 that in living this way we are just following in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ because he talks about the Old Testament prophets predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

So you think it's not right that I'm going through suffering and trials. Remember Jesus did. we follow in his steps. We follow in his sufferings that we might follow in his glories.

What has God provided? Living hope. What do you need? Living hope.

What has God given you? living hope. Come on you can do it dear friends. How might you live?

With living hope. How do you want to die? With living hope don't you? Well you better start practicing now.

[28 : 36] It's a bit late to think on the day of your death. Oh I think I need living hope. practice now my advice and you'll die well. Well George Whitfield was a great evangelist here in Scotland and in England and North America and he went to be a student at Pembroke College Oxford as a 17 year old recently converted to Christ.

here is his account of his first trials as a believer. Forgive the slightly dated language. But when religion began to take root in my heart and I was fully convinced my soul must totally be renewed I was visited with outward and inward trials.

I incurred the displeasure of the master of the college who threatened to expel me. My relations counted my life madness. I daily underwent some contempt at college.

Some have thrown dirt at me. Two friends forsook me. Then in his journal he writes this about these trials. These though little were useful trials.

trials. They inured me to contempt, lessened self-love and taught me to die daily. Isn't that remarkable?

[29 : 59] I don't often hear Christians today talking about useful trials. Here's another one which I find equally challenging.

John Fletcher was a friend of John Wesley and one occasion when he was ill he was visited by a friend who said as you do. I'm sorry to find you so ill. Fletcher replied sorry sir why should you be sorry?

It's the chastisement of my heavenly father and I rejoice in it. I love the rod of my God rejoice therein as an expression of his love and affection towards me.

Well I've never managed that. When I get a cold I don't say well thank you God for a cold. I think oh how awful. Poor me because I get worse colds than anybody else you know.

They're really serious. Other people get a cold I think oh stop complaining. When I have one it's nearly the end of the world. It's a man cold. It's really serious matter. Sorry you're ill.

[31 : 05] Why should you be sorry? Well here's most challenging of all. Here's a prayer request from the persecuted church in the Middle East. Christ. Please don't pray for us.

If you pray for us you'll pray the wrong things you'll pray for our safety. You mean you don't want us to pray for your safety?

I mean surely you'd pray for the safety of persecuted Christians. Please pray with us. Listen to this. if you pray with us you'll ask God to bring millions to faith in Christ.

You'll pray that when the inevitable backlash comes because of our witness we'll be faithful even if it costs us our lives. Isn't that remarkable?

If I were a persecuted Christian I'd be sending out emails every day. Please pray that I'd be rescued. then I might remember that actually Paul never prayed or asked for prayers that he'd be let out of prison but that he'd be faithful to Christ in prison.

[32 : 20] And how I'm challenged and warmed by these words from our contemporary brothers and sisters in Christ facing persecution today. Pray with us.

Ask God to bring millions to faith in Christ. Christ. And pray that when the inevitable backlash comes because of our witness we'll be faithful even if it costs us our lives.

Well friends what a massive challenge and what a great possibility. What an open door God has set before us. God has set us to us to be born again to a living hope to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We stand to pray together. together we pray.

Blessed are you God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to your greatness you have caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for us as we are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[34 : 03] We rejoice in this though now for a little while we are grieved by various trials so that the tested genuineness of our faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire may result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though we have not seen him we love him. Though we do not now see him we believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory receiving the outcome of our faith the salvation of our souls.

Help us to set our hope fully on the grace that will be given us when Jesus Christ is revealed. In his name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.