

1 Peter 1:6-12

“Temporal Grief, Eternal Glory”

There’s something about humanity that’s sorta like water, or sorta like electricity, we have a tendency to always seek the path of least resistance. We don’t want trials we want triumph, we don’t like pain we like power, we don’t really *want* to endure, we want to escape. However we need to understand that difficult days, tough times and trials aren’t only a part of life *generally* they are part and parcel with the Christian life *specifically*. Remember that Jesus never said that He was the *easy* way; He never said He was the path of least resistance. He said that He was the *only* way and made it very clear that the path that led to everlasting life was one that was narrow, very difficult and only few would find it. Broad would be the way (an ez “go with the flow” kind of way) that would lead to destruction and by comparison the masses would choose that path.

I mentioned to you last week that when you came to Christ that was not the end. It wasn’t like, “Finally! He/she is in Christ...mission accomplished.” It wasn’t the end, it was merely the beginning! God has a plan for you, wants to use you in instrumental ways in the accomplishing of His agenda, and along the way He wants to mature you, cause you to grow as a believer, for more than one purpose. For 1 God wants to use you in greater and more effective ways; that will happen as you learn what it means to decrease that He might increase in your life, as I learn to crucify the flesh and walk in the Spirit. But not only does God want to use you in greater ways on this earth where everything is at best *temporary*, He’s preparing you for *eternity*.

He’s maturing you, preparing you now for what He has planned for you then, He’s preparing you in these brief years for the plan that He has for you concerning the next 10 billion yrs. Now we would like to think that Christian maturity could take place by simply having some sort of spiritual awakening as if magic pixie dust were sprinkled over us and in that moment we were completely transformed in a way that took us from immature, to mature, from shaky in our faith to solid, from antsy to anchored. But it doesn’t work that way, we can’t read a few Ch’s in our bible, memorize a few Vs, spend a little time in prayer and suddenly we’re “super saint”. Oh don’t get me wrong those things are both great and necessary. But here’s the deal, those things that you’re praying for (to be like Jesus) those principles that you’re reading of in God’s word, God wants to work them out in your life in real time. Christ like character doesn’t come exclusively from spending time in prayer and in God’s word (and I want to be careful here because I don’t want anyone to misunderstand me, those things are absolutely essential to the Christian life). You’ll definitely learn insights, principles and points of Christ like characteristics as you study the word.

However where those things become a practical working reality in your life is through working them out in life experience. Or to understand that another way, it takes *time, trials, and tribulation*; you and I need to understand that more often than not God forges Christian maturity upon the anvil of affliction. It's not something that we can do for ourselves, we can't improve ourselves through various self-help methods, the maturing work of God is the work of the *Spirit* of God in our lives.

There are no short cuts, no cliff notes on Christian maturity, the fact is (though we want to resist it) He often times allows trials to teach us, to purge and purify us, and to strengthen and mature us. Let's look at Vs 6.

Vs6-7

We spoke last week of the fact that Peter was at a point there in Vs 3 whereby he was so overwhelmed, so blessed by the saving grace of God that had been imputed to him in Christ that he simply couldn't not erupt in a word of praise and worship to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

Now here at the beginning of Vs 6 he brings us into that same sense of necessity, "In *this you greatly* rejoice," and we do don't we? If we don't shame on us, we should. We should *greatly* rejoice in the *abundant* mercy that God has extended to us in Christ. and I'm just going to say that if you *don't* rejoice *greatly*, if there's not a sense of overwhelming gratitude, thanksgiving and praise that wells up deep down *inside* you and explodes up *through* you like a geyser from your heart when you think carefully through what God has done for you then the sad fact is that you don't really understand the reality of your depravity and what God has done for you in Christ. Do me a favor, leave 1st Peter and turn to Luke's gospel Ch 7. Luke 7 (Vs 37-48)

As we approach the 37th Vs Jesus has just been invited to a Pharisees house for dinner, check it out.

Vs37-48

Here's what I want you to see, Jesus was in reality rebuking the Pharisee because he *should've been the one* who washed the Lord's feet, who humbled himself before *Him* and gave the adoration of his heart *to Him*. The sad fact however is that the condition of his depravity wasn't a reality to him. The implication that Jesus is making to him is that his sin is every bit as atrocious (and costly to Him) as was this woman's. The only difference is that she recognized her sin, he didn't. Therefore she displayed her devotion, offered openly her adoration, the Pharisee didn't see the need for it.

Understand that whether you felt like you were a pretty good guy/gal before you came to Christ, or you feel like you were the chief of sinners, your sin cost Him just as much as did anyone else's and no matter how you look at it there was enough sin between you and God to separate you from Him for all eternity, you've been forgiven much.

Do you understand why God's mercy toward me and toward you is *abundant*? Because we *need* an abundance of mercy, the idea being that we have an *abundance* of sin, self centered motives, lust in our heart, covetousness and greed, jealousy and envy, we *gravitate* toward sin if not constantly cultivating through discipline a life led in the Spirit, we *need* God's mercy and we should *greatly rejoice* in it. (If you weren't here last week let me encourage you to pick up a copy of that cd).

However as we read the next two words of Vs 6 they sort of set us up for a contrast of sorts don't they? What are the words? "Though now..." "This is what God's done *for* you, on behalf *of* you, this is what's waiting *on* you (an eternal inheritance) you rejoice *in* it, are ecstatic and rightly so *about* it, however for *now*..." and with that comes a contrast, "This is what *will be*, but this is what *now is*" and they couldn't be much more polar opposite, everlasting euphoria in the presence of the living God Vs a time of temporary testing to through trials that grieve our deepest most inward man.

He says, "Now for a little while if need be you have been grieved by various trials," the word "various" speaking of the fact that they come in all shapes, sizes and wide ranging degrees of difficulty. The word "trials" speaking of adversities, afflictions or troubles; here's the point, adversities, afflictions or troubles will visit your life in all shapes and sizes and in varying degrees of difficulty depending on the situation at hand.

Having said that there are 3 things that Peter points out to us that he wants us to know about these various trials that at times factor into the equation of our lives, did you see them there? What is it that Peter would have us to know about these trials? If you take notes you might jot this down; Life's Trials: #1 They're Temporary, #2 They're At Times *Necessary*, and #3 They Can Grieve You Deeply.

#1 They're temporary, he says that we greatly rejoice in what's in store for us concerning *eternity*, however trials are at times a reality for us *presently*. But notice that he says they're for *a little while*, translation...they're temporary. They're a *certainty* for sure, you can count on them, Jesus said, "*In the world you will have tribulation;*" John 16:33 We read in the book of Acts, "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*" Acts 14:22 Tribulation is a certainty, however equally true is the fact that your tribulation (no matter how bad) is at best temporary.

How many times we've been in the midst of a radically tough time and couldn't see how it would ever work out yet here we are today, the trial has passed and by the grace of God we're still pressing on? We have a tendency to have tunnel vision and we can't see the forest for the tree in front of our face however you need to keep close to your heart that the fact of the matter is that in Christ our troubles at their worst are at best temporary.

It's imperative that we maintain the eternal perspective, even if your sorrow, your trouble, your trial lasts the rest of your days here on this earth, compared to eternity it's a vapor. Paul said it like this, "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*" 2 Corinthians 4:17 Now don't be thrown off by Paul's verbiage there. He mentions *light* afflictions, the fact is he went through much, much more than you or I probably ever will. You read of the things that went on in that man's life it's staggering. What he's doing is creating contrast, he's saying that compared to what it's working out for us eternally it's nothing to go through the most horrid experiences presently.

Now I'm going to shoot straight with you and this won't offer much solace, there will be times that we go through tremendously painful experiences and won't necessarily understand why or what good will come of it. Here's what the bible says, "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*" Rom 8:28 Here's what the bible *doesn't* say, "and We *see* how all things work together for good to those who love God." It doesn't say, "and We *understand* how all things work together for good to those who love God." The bible doesn't say that, we may not *ever* understand it, or see the good *in* it but we know that ultimately eternally it's for my good and God's glory because we believe the word of God and trust Him in the midst *of* it, because we know that God is good, that He loves us, that He's for us and not against us, has thoughts of peace and not evil toward us, to give us a future and a hope. #1 Our trials are *temporary*.

#2 Our trials are at times *necessary*, did you see that there? He says, "though now for a little while *if need be* you have been grieved by various trials." Did you know that trials can at times be *necessary* in our lives?

It's that anvil of affliction upon which God fashions us and forms us in a manner that complies with the plan that He has for us, so many things that God accomplishes in us upon the anvil of affliction. The psalmist said, "*I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.*" Psalms 119:75

What kind of things does God accomplish for us or forge into us upon the anvil of affliction? All kinds of things, we know that God can use affliction to teach us obedience. Again the psalmist said, “*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*” Ps 119:67 What else? The bible teaches that at times God will (in His faithfulness) administer affliction for *preventative* purposes, to *keep us from sinning*. Affliction reminds us of our humanity, keeps us walking in humility.

As we just noted although it’s only temporary God is using it to our advantage *eternally*, however we should also note that through affliction God works a deeper more Christ like character into us which makes us more effective in ministering *presently*. We’re able to minister to people compassionately, having had God’s comfort administered to us we’re able then to comfort others with the comfort by which we ourselves have been comforted by God (2 Cor 1:3-4).

God will also use affliction in our lives to help us to loosen our grip on the things of this world and set our sights on things above, pain/affliction brings us to a place whereby we’re ready to be done with this place and move on to be at home with the Lord. #2 There are times when trials are necessary.

#3 Trials Can Grieve You Deeply, Peter says that at times even grief is a necessary aspect of the trial. I think it’s important to highlight that because some believer will consent to the fact that trials come and go in the believer’s life however a *strong* believer won’t be *grieved* by it but will simply scoff in the face of it. Almost as though they perceive Christians as some sort of superhuman by which the bullets of tribulation simply bounce off their chest. The fact however is that as Peter tells us here trials can pierce us deeply and grieve us tremendously, yet somehow and for some reason it can at times be *necessary*. Which is to say that God has a purpose not only for our trial, but the heavy grief that we experience in the midst of it...

But here’s what we need to understand; when God allows a trial to come into our lives it’s not for the purpose of *punishing* us, but rather for the purpose of *purifying* us, why? That we might be of greater value both to Him and to others around us; you see as we transition out of Vs 6 and into Vs 7 Peter gives us even greater insight into the necessity and the benefits of being buffeted by trials. Not only are they temporary, necessary and at times grievous inwardly, they’re refining your faith and making for glory eternally. Temporal grief, eternal glory, check it out.

Vs7

The bottom line is this; trials test your faith, and in the end they *purify* your faith. What's the purpose of the refiner's fire? The refiner will place that gold in the furnace and as it heats up to over 1900 degrees it will begin to melt and breakdown. and What happens is the impurities float to the top so that he can skim off the dross that in the end his product is pure and of greater value.

The *heat* of the trials that come into our lives have a tendency to cause impurities to float to the surface, at times we get bitter or angry, we treat others poorly, our speech turns ugly, and God is seeking to deal with us in those areas. You see the trial didn't cause those things to come into your life, it only drew out and brought to the surface what was already down in there.

Now, understand that our faith isn't tested because God doesn't know how much or what kind of faith we have. It's tested because so often *we* don't really know how much or what kind of faith we have. I don't want to say this to weird anyone out but it's possible to have a false sense of security. When Jesus was teaching on the parable of the soils the sower of the seed cast some seed on stony ground. Initially the stalk shot up, things were looking good, but there was no real root, no real fruit because when the sun came up and the *heat of the day* shone upon it, it withered away. When Jesus interprets the parable for us He tells us plainly that those are like unto the people who hear the word and receive it initially but when the *heat is on* when persecution or tribulation arises in their lives they stumble and abandon ship, the go back into the world. So the question is if you abandon the faith when the going gets tough did you ever *really* have faith at all? It's good that our faith be tested so that its enduring quality might be proved out.

Charles Spurgeon said this, "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."

Here's Peter's point; if gold is fit to be tested and purified by fire, how much more our faith which is much more precious than gold that perishes? As faith is tested by fire it serves to purify your faith separating that which is genuine Vs that which is dross and good for nothing but to be discarded, dealt with and repented of. The testing of your faith will show its sincerity, its strength, and its enduring quality as you continue to trust the Lord in your days of difficulty. There was a fellow in the bible by the name of Job who became intimately acquainted with the refiner's fire.

Remember what he said? *“But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”* Job 23:10 As God takes you through the fire He’s purifying your faith. The psalmist said this, *“For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment.”* Ps 66:10-12 In Isaiah 48 we read this, *“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”* Isa 48:10

Tested in the furnace of affliction... why does that sound so familiar? It was 3 Hebrew boys remember? Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego (Dan 3), talk about faith tested by fire, it doesn’t get much *hotter* than that. Yet you recall that it was in the midst of the fiery furnace that Jesus showed up and was seen so clearly in their midst as He kept them in the midst of the fire yet refused to let the flames so much as singe them nor let the smell of smoke cling to them. The impact that their faith made in that moment was kingdom wide (and understandably so). People turned to the Lord because of the fruit that came forth through their faith in the midst of the refiner’s fire. God will use those trials in your life to show Himself real to others *around* you by what He’s doing *through* you as you trust in Him by faith, and it will be found to praise, honor and glorify Christ at His appearing, at the revelation of Jesus Christ

Vs8-9

Again the culmination of our salvation will be realized at the return of Christ, all our trials, all our troubles will be over when we see Jesus face to face, until then we endure them through faith.

Few things quickly about Vs 8. #1 Notice that though we’ve not seen Jesus (as Peter had) still we love Him. Jesus told Thomas after His resurrection, *“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* John 20:29 It’s the work of the Holy Spirit to make Christ real to you. In the book of Romans we read, *“... the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* Rom 5:5 If Jesus doesn’t seem *real* to you, almost more like folklore or some character you’ve heard about your whole life but you don’t really feel like you know Him any more than you know Hercules or something, than He’s not really *real* to you. The bible exhorts us to make our calling and election *sure*. If you are in Christ the Holy Spirit will bear witness with your spirit, in your heart that you are a child of God, that Christ died *for* you, He lives *in* you and He will be real *to* you. Will you ever have struggles or questions? More than likely, welcome to humanity, but the Holy Spirit will cause the life of Christ to be real *to* you and course *through* you. *“Whom having not seen you love.”* That’s called walking by faith, receiving the witness of the word of God, as opposed to walking by sight.

The 2nd thing that Peter distinguishes here is the fact that joy is not circumstantial. He just got finished speaking on the reality of deeply grievous trials yet he follows up with joy inexpressible and full of glory, whaz up with that? He's saying there's a distinct difference between happiness and joy, joy is the inner quality that Christ gives us that never has to go away. Oh sometimes we let it slip away, but it's waiting on us when we're ready to have it back because it's not based upon our circumstances. It's not based upon what goes down around us, but rather that which Christ has done for us. Happiness is based upon my circumstances, I get a raise I'm happy, I get fired I'm not so happy anymore. That's circumstantial, the joy of the Lord is on a different level, it's a constant, not a variable based upon His work on my behalf, that He loves me, gave Himself for me and has imparted His joy to me.

The 3rd thing here is that Peter isn't saying that we're to rejoice *over* our circumstances, "Oh yeah I need surgery!" "Oh yeah I've lost my job now I'm losing my home." We can't always rejoice *over* them but we can rejoice *in* them, it goes back to focusing *not* on what's happening around us circumstantially, but what Christ has done for me personally and what awaits me eternally.

"Whom having not seen, you love." You guys that's such a key, loving the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. You do that everything else will fall in line, if you don't do that no course in this world will help you ultimately. If you love the Lord it'll do wonders for your marriage, for your family, for the church body. If not you will invite unnecessary struggles, stresses and strains into your life.

Vs10-11

To keep this brief the idea here is that the prophets were writing scripture that they themselves didn't understand. No matter how hard they tried they couldn't connect the dots.

They were writing of the rule and reign of the Messiah, of His kingdom there shall be no end, that His salvation would be to the ends of the earth. Then they'd turn around and write of Him being despised and rejected of man, acquainted with grief and with sorrow, that His hands and feet would be pierced, His beard would be ripped from His face. He would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

They didn't get it. How can He be killed, yet reign in glory? God told Jeremiah that a new covenant was coming whereby He would write His law upon the people's hearts, that an age of grace on the horizon, not law. They couldn't see the twice coming of Christ, and that between His grief and His glory would be an age of grace, they couldn't put it all together. Daniel was trying to figure it all out when finally the angel told him, "Go your way Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." You're writing for a future generation who will understand it at that time, notice Vs 12.

Vs12

They recorded it faithfully yet to them it was a mystery, hindsight is 20/20, foresight is much more hazy, they couldn't quite get a grip on and wrap their understanding around the Savior that would suffer, but now that the gospel has been made known we're able to see it. We understand that Jesus was made sin for us that we might be made the righteous of God in Him, that He took upon Himself the penalty of death that we're due. But He'll come again to rule and to reign with a rod of iron and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.

Finally, it's sort of interesting to think that God kept certain things "secret" from the angels isn't it? The bible teaches us that with regard to the gospel, the mystery and miracle of salvation, the translation from death to life, from being at enmity *with* God to being a son or a daughter *of* God peaks the interest of the angelic beings. The word, "desire" speaks of an intense longing and setting of the heart upon, the word "look into" speaks of leaning over and peering into intently. Here's the deal, angels dig bible study, seeing the gospel put into action, it's intriguing to see God's redemption take place in a person's life, the bible tells us that the angels of heaven rejoice when even 1 sinner comes to repentance.

From salvation, to sanctification, often times we grow through grief, struggles, hardship; but take heart your trials are temporary and you can rest assured that they're working for your good and God's glory eternally.

Prayer Points:

Father it can be difficult in the midst of struggles, during days of difficulty to maintain the eternal perspective, would You help us. Strengthen us that we might look *to* You and trust whole heartedly *in* You in the "purifying process". Help us to love You with all that we are knowing that as we place You 1st, You'll bring the balance to the areas of our lives that are out of sync, out of step with You. We thank You for Your grace and may Your joy abound in us to the overflow, to the glory of Your name.

Is today the day of Your salvation? Is God dealing with you, tugging *on* you, seeking to draw you unto Himself? Jesus can be made real to you today, forgiveness, freedom from sin, new life awaits, the Holy Spirit wants to pour the love of God liberally into your heart, and fill the void that lingers deep with in you. Where sin abounds grace abounds still more you need only to call upon Him, cry out to Him and you will be saved...