

Peter wrote his first letter to suffering believers, especially with their suffering in mind. Their suffering was not essentially from wide-spread, government persecution (though that would come), but from the ordinary, everyday struggles of believers at home, in the workplace, and in the community. When God saved them, they became “aliens and strangers” (1 Peter 1:2, 17; 2:11) on this earth, with a differing allegiance, lifestyle, and spiritual life.

After his initial greeting (1:1–2), Peter offers a prayer of praise to God for the great salvation which God has provided for believers (1:3–12). Within his prayer are hints of the themes of the letter including that of suffering. The middle subsection (vv. 6–9) states and explains the joy which his readers had in their salvation despite suffering. Their joyful perseverance in trials affirmed their love, faith, and eternal blessing in Jesus Christ. Understanding the nature of trials and the grounds for rejoicing will help us praise God as well.

I. *Why trials? Trials are part of God's good purposes in the believer's life.*

1. *The character of trials (1:6):*

- a. Current but relatively short when measured against eternity
- b. Necessary as part of God’s work in us and the world situation (cf. Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 5:8)
- c. Grievous, even though facing them with pure joy (James 1:2)
- d. Varied, with different forms, different sources, different reactions in different people

2. *The purpose of trials (1:7):*

- a. A purpose of trials is to establish the genuineness of your faith. (See especially the ESV translation of verse 7.) A tested genuineness of faith is more valuable than gold which though tested is not eternal. Trials provide that testing.
- b. A purpose of trials is for the tested genuineness of faith to result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ appears.
 - At the appearing of Jesus (cf. Colossians 3:4) believers with tested genuine faith will receive honor rather than shame (cf. 1 John 2:28) and the praise of “well done” from the Master (cf. Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:5).
 - God will receive praise, honor, and glory because all will recognize that it has been His work that brought about faithfulness.

II. *How can the believer rejoice? Rejoicing is the Spirit-produced response to God's good purposes.*

1. *The character of rejoicing*

- a. Current (though not excluding future joy)
- b. Within the context of a great salvation (1:3–5)
- c. Despite trials
- d. Greatly rejoicing (v. 6, 8), with joy inexpressible (unexplainable) and full of glory (a foretaste of future glory and an evidence of God’s present work in the believer)

2. *The source/cause of rejoicing (1:8–9)*

- a. A love for Jesus, though not having seen him.
- b. A faith in Jesus, though not seeing him now (cf. John 20:29).
- c. A present, growing assurance of eternal salvation, through the current sanctifying work of God in the life of believers

It is good to be reminded that believers are “aliens and strangers” on earth. We do not share the values, goals, or desires of this world system. Neither are we under its dominion. And for that reason trials will come. But we are rejoice that even trials are within the sovereign will of a good, heavenly Father who benefits us through trials with a tested genuineness of our faith to result in praise, honor, and glory. Nurture your love for Jesus and your faith in Jesus. Regard the struggles of life as His work in drawing you closer to Himself and preparing you for eternity.