

TITLE: Satisfaction in the Sovereign Joy of Our Salvation (Part 6)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1:6-7

THEME: The Sovereign mercy of God fuels the sovereign joy of our salvation

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Read Passage

I opened a can of worms last week . . .

when during my intro. I spent some time talking about t/pop. motivational speaker Joel Osteen. I use "motivational speaker" because that's what he and those like him (Joyce Meyer) really are. They're not preachers in t/biblical sense of t/term and their style and substance have little to do w/historic Xnty. They're "teflon" message/method not Xnty.

I was talking to my friend Reid Ferguson last week

He mentioned to me that he had read an interview of J.O. in which he claimed that their new worship center (17k ppl) does not have any trappings of Xnty such as crosses. Reason was that they don't want to offend people. First thing I thought of was that t/cross is an offense, much like t/Gospel. It is foolishness and an offense to those who reject it and it is wisdom and power to those saved by it.

I was thinking about this & also reflecting on t/fact that whenever I tune in to watch Mr. Osteen (purely for entertainment & research purposes!) I rarely hear him say the name of Jesus, or JC. So I thought I'd do a little more research myself and this is what I found.

In 1 interview transcript, Osteen defended t/use of modern methodology to reach the masses, particularly the younger ones by saying=>

The younger set are attracted to the church settings "*the best lighting and the best sound system,*" a youth ministry program that attracts hundreds, and every service kicks off with 30 minutes of upbeat contemporary music -- not hymns -- played by a live band. "*It's not a churchy feel,*" . . . "*We don't have crosses up there. We believe in all that, but I like to take the barriers down that have kept people from coming.*" [<http://www.letusreason.org/Popteac29.htm>]

I can't help but wonder what sort of person would want to go to a supposed Xn CH who is offended by even seeing a cross, of all places at CH. Not only is t/cross an offense, so is the name of JC.

As I mentioned before I've noticed that Mr. Osteen usually substitutes t/less offensive generic "God" for t/name of Jesus.

I actually discovered that there is a ministry research group that evaluates t/messages of popular preachers using three basic criteria==>

- 1) How often is Jesus mentioned in the sermon?
- 2) Is Jesus the subject of the verbs? IOW Is Jesus t/one who acts, or are you?
- 3) What are the verbs? What has Jesus done and what is He doing?

[Researcher is Todd Wilken, of the radio program Issues, Etc]

Why in homilistics we are exhorted to preach "Christologically"

In using this criteria, one researcher writes==>

". . . we will find that Osteen does very poorly. He seldom mentions Jesus, and only mentions the Bible in passing. Osteen preaches a message that is not distinctly Christian, and in truth is not much different from what you might hear coming from Anthony Robbins or any other motivational, feel-good speaker. He deliberately avoids preaching the full Gospel message.

Quote two other observers==>

[one] concluded that in the message there was "No Christ, no cross, no mention of man's moral bankruptcy, just the feel-good positive message of assurance that God always rewards human effort and virtue." Another who has listened to over twenty five hours of Osteen says "Osteen's messages are about "God's Favor" on marriage, finances and career. Sin is never mentioned. In well over 25 hours of preaching that I listened to this year, Jesus was almost never mentioned, and when he was mentioned, it was in a perfunctory prayer in the last minute. Sin, the Cross, the atonement? Not there."

[<http://www.challies.com/archives/000768.php>]

I would add that it's not there because it's not what sells to the masses.

One other item of interest (purely trivia). May amaze you, but this guy is apparently a little older than I am. When I first saw him a few years ago I was shocked and thought - this guy looks like he's still in H.S.!

He's not. I found one interview that said he was 42 - may have been of last year - (& another that said he left Oral Roberts Univ. in 1981 (year I grad. from H.S.).

Sum and substance of all this? Part of the Mix for successful church are not only a feel-good, non-offensive message (ala Norman Vincent Peale/R. Schuller), but also good looks, youthfulness, being well-dressed, a great smile, and a pretty wife. Well, I score well on the last point, but as for good looks, youthfulness, being well-dressed and a great smile . . . Let's not go there. (As you can see I'm single-handedly trying to bring back the knit tie!)

When someone takes a post-it note on t/portrait I have of an aged and tired C.H. Spurgeon in my heroes hallway and writes, "Tony B. in a few years" that's a pretty good indication that I'm not likely to be mistaken for Tom Cruise, another who is actually older than I am!

I mention all of this because it is indicative of a greater problem

This is all part of the new liberalism. New liberalism is a watered-down version of Xnty that, unfortunately, is part of t/greater evangelical movt. Really isn't much difference between Joel Osteen (part of t/CH growth movt. Word of Faith style) and Bill Hybels, or Rick Warren who are part of it Baptist style. They are all part of the problem of the new liberalism.

The old liberalism began when CH's set aside truth in favor of the Social Gospel. The new liberalism is setting aside truth in favor of a Psychological, self-help Gospel. T.O.L. resulted in a denial of t/historic Xn message. T.N.L. is resulting in a neglect of t/historic Xn message & if history is any indication, it will land itself in t/same cesspool that t/old liberalism did: Religion w/o Regeneration. Christ w/o t/cross. Salvation w/o Sacrifice.

We are seeing a fulfillment of 2 Timothy 4 {read}

Not only did I open a can of worms by way of my introduction, but to bring us back to our passage for this AM, I sort of feel like the man who jumped on his horse and rode off madly in all directions.

By that I specifically am referring to our outline

I. The Elements of the Sovereign Joy of Our Salvation (3-9)

A. SJ was Prompted by God's Great Mercy (3a)

B. SJ is Accomplished Through Our New Birth (3b)

C. SJ of our Salvation is Preserved by God's Power (5a)

Fourthly (lastly) ==>

D. The Sovereign Joy of Our Salvation will be Evidenced by Persevering Faith (6-9)

Five characteristics of this persevering faith . . .

1. A Persevering Faith That:

a. Results in Joy (6a)

b. Stands the Test of Trials (6b-7)

c. Loves The Lord (whom we have not seen) (8a)

d. Believes in The Lord (whom we don't see) (8b)

e. Is the Means to Final Salvation (9)

I think this outline is basically accurate but not a bulls-eye. Imp. of a good outline.

1st point we looked at in v. 6, 1st characteristic of persevering faith==>

1. A Persevering Faith That:

a. Results in Joy (6a)

b. Stands the Test of Trials (6b-7)

This is where I want to juggle my outline. This point is so imp. to the context. Rem. t/gist of 1 Peter has to do w/handling suffering as a Xn.

(1) Another way to look at all of this

Basic principles that we can learn about trials from this passage. Really want to focus on this for a moment since it's so germane to all of our lives. I have a total of 5 Principles that relate to trials and suffering from a Xn perspective.

(a) Suffering is Unavoidable (Principle of Necessity)

Trials are a necessary part of life, yes, even for t/believer in JC.

Philip Yancey rightly observed - "The kingdom of suffering is a democracy, and we all stand in it or alongside it with nothing but our naked humanity."

i. Little phrase in middle of v. 6 - εἰ δέοι (it is necessary)

1st class condition in t/Gk. (assumed to be true - "since"). IOW "It is certain!" It's part of life. Picture of Xnty as being a relationship w/God whereby you are exempted from all the pain of sin is wrong. It's a lie.

ii. JC is not a divine skyhook whose sole purpose it is to lift us out of life's problems!

Those who seek him for those reasons don't really find him. That is t/root of so many false professions of faith. I don't know how many I've seen who have made a profession of faith during difficult times in their lives w/t principal motivation that by doing so all of their problems would go away. Foxhole mentality.

"Okay God. I'll go to church. I'll profess faith in your Son. Just get me out of this." Of course, when He doesn't "get them out of this" they walk away because they didn't get what they wanted.

There's a difference between wanting peace w/God knowing that you have brought great offense against him AND wanting all my problems to disappear.

There's a backward parallel to t/parable of t/soils in Matt. 13 (someone hears and seemingly receives t/Word of God but suffering comes and they walk away from it all). Reason was because t/soil wasn't right.

They were never right w/God (regenerate) in first place.

iii. We're all a by-product of the fall

All of us are sinful; all of us live in a fallen world; all of us will experience times of great sorrow and pain.

Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14 following their first missionary journey in Asia Minor, returned to some of t/CHs there to ==>

[strengthen] the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and {saying,} "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." [ACT 14:22]

(a) *Suffering is Unavoidable . . .*

1PE 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

(b) Suffering Doesn't Last Forever (Principle of Temporality)

Affliction is but for a short time. "It will end."

That's what Peter means here==>

. . . **though now FOR A LITTLE WHILE, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,**

We don't have to go through difficult times forever. We may find that a bad day turns into a week of bad days or weeks of bad days or months of bad days. Even years! In light of eternity it is just "a little while."

Peter begins and ends his letter on this same note. Same phrase that's used here is used in the same way in 5:10==>

And after you have suffered **FOR A LITTLE WHILE**, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

It's like a long distance race (what life is). We meander through t/course of life & we encounter hills (small trials), we encounter mountains (big

ones). Sometimes we coast down hill (times of relative ease). In t/race we find detour signs, we get stuck in t/mud and spin our wheels. Yet all of us continue in t/race focused on t/prize at t/finish line: t/glorious reward of our God JC. And we look back and realize that t/wind of t/HS was at our back t/whole time encouraging us onward.

I don't know where you are today. Are you coasting downhill or are you facing what seems to be an insurmountable mountain? Brother or sister focus on t/prize. Realize that you will climb t/mountain & find that it was t/Spirit of God who gave you t/strength to do so.

(c) Suffering is Many-Faceted (Principle of Complexity)

There are different kinds of trials. They run t/gamut & include just about everything that life can throw our way.

... you have been grieved by **VARIOUS TRIALS**,

i. They were "diverse" // "various" (ποικίλος)

Word used in ancient lit. to describe a leopard's spots, various colors/shapes of veins that run through marble, t/changing of months/seasons, changes in music. [Vincent].

Like each of our lives, trials come in all shapes and forms and at different seasons. Complex.

Peter's wording strongly parallels that of James==>

JAM 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various (ποικίλος) trials,

As complex and diverse as are afflictions, God's grace is sufficient isn't it? TAP was no stranger to suffering.

2CO 4:8-11, 17 - 8 afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being

delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

In chapter 12 he spoke of his "thorn in the flesh" an unnamed affliction that he refers to as a "messenger of Satan."

8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

ii. This isn't apostolic privilege

What's was true for Paul was true for saints t/o t/ages. What was true for them is true for believers t/o t/world // true for you. Say it out loud to yourself! Believe it!

God's grace is sufficient for YOU. For YOU power is perfected in weakness. YOU can boast about YOUR weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in YOU! 10 YOU may be content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when YOU are weak, then YOU are strong!

(d) Suffering Can't Preclude Rejoicing (Principle of Joy)

i. Verse six looks backward and forward

In this you rejoice (*looking back to the blessings of vv. 3,4,5*) **though now** (*in the present*) . . . **you [suffer grief with] various trials,**

In [all of] this you [are rejoicing] . . . (Pres. tense)

ii. ἀγαλλιαω

A word used in NT to describe great or lively joy. Could call it

"salvation joy." Joy t/Philippian Jailer experienced when he found salvation (Acts 16:34). Used in LXX to translate Psalm 51:12 (**restore to me the joy of my salvation**).

Main idea in our passage==>

The Sovereign mercy of God fuels the Sovereign joy of our salvation.

That's a joy that stands the test of trials. That's a joy that's "The flag that flies on the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there."

iii. This isn't some sort of Christian Masochism

Pleasure in pain for the sake of t/pain itself. This isn't pleasure in pain; this is pleasure in God (big diff!).

iv. {Go through the points of vv. 3-5}

Hope and Joy are always connected to certainty. Problem is that life is uncertain. So rank and file of mankind have to real hope or joy. But we have certainty. That's why as believers in JC we can rejoice no matter what comes our way. Because we have ==>

I. The Sovereign Joy of Our Salvation (3-9)

A. Tasted of God's Great Mercy (3a)

B. He Has Caused us to be Born Again (3b)

1. We Have Present Hope (3c)

2. We Have a Future Inheritance (4)

C. We are Preserved by God's Power (5a)

D. We Will Persevere (6-9)

a. Results in Joy (6a)

b. Stands the Test of Trials (6b-7)

(d) *Suffering Can't Preclude Rejoicing (Principle of Joy)*

There's a connection between this point and the next one. If trials and suffering were at t/whims of chance & had no purpose we would all be fatalists wouldn't we? What will be will be.

Reminds me of a story about a king who had a close friend with whom he grew up. The friend had a habit of looking at every situation that ever occurred in his life (positive or negative) and remarking, "This is good!"

One day the king and his friend were on a hunting expedition. The friend would load and prepare the guns for the king. In preparing one of the guns, the friend had apparently done something wrong, for after taking the gun from his friend, the king fired it and his thumb was blown off.

Examining the situation the friend remarked as usual, "This is good!" To which the king replied, "No, this is NOT good!" and proceeded to send his friend to jail.

About a year later, the king was hunting in a dangerous area. Cannibals captured him and took him to their village. They tied his hands, stacked some wood, set up a stake and bound him to it. As they approached to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. Being superstitious, they never ate anyone that was less than whole. So after untying the king, they sent him on his way.

As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb and felt remorse for his treatment of his friend. He went immediately to the jail to speak with his friend. "You were right," he said, "it was good that my thumb was blown off." And he proceeded to tell the friend all that had just happened. "And so I am very sorry for sending you to jail for so long. It was bad for me to do this."

"No," his friend replied, "This is good!" "What do you mean, 'This is good'? How could it be good that I sent my friend to jail for a year?"

"If I had NOT been in jail, I would have been with you."

Lot's of ways of looking at things!

Brings us to verse 7 (5th point) ==>

(e) Suffering Has a Purpose (Principle of Beneficiality)

As a Xn you never go through t/trials of life, t/pain, t/sadness, t/affliction, alone. You never go through these things w/o purpose.

In order that the testing of your faith . . .

i. That's what it's all about! [^]

This actually forms what is called a purpose (*ινα*) clause in the Greek. "In order that" (for the purpose of). What? Testing your faith.

ii. Word δοκίμιον (testing)

Ancient assayer's word used of testing t/genuineness of precious metals - sep. t/gold from t/dross (*genuine, without alloy*). Used of "testing" or "discerning" spirits (1 John 4:1); of the testing of deacons (1 Tim. 3:10), of testing animals, oxen (Luke 14:19). Even of analyzing t/weather (Luke 12:56).

In 2 Cor. 13:5 it's used ISW as it's used here: Of testing genuine faith. Faith isn't found true until it's under fire/tested.

* Turn to James 2 (vv. 14-23)

When I was a kid I remember watching TV & having whatever I was watching interrupted by a test of the EBS. "This is only a test." IOW - don't worry, this isn't the real thing. Not true here. This is the real thing.

It's a test, but it's more than any test==>

. . . being more precious than fine gold which is perishable, being purified through fire might pass the test and be found [true] . . .

iii. Interesting comparison here

Your faith, if genuine, is more valuable than fine gold. Why? Because gold is what? "perishable." Substitute whatever word you want. Gold was t/ultimate standard of earthly wealth in t/first c. I don't care what it is - all t/money in the world // all t/power // prestige // stuff. It can't compare. Why? Because it's all temporal and not eternal. It doesn't last.

Bill Gates and Donald Trump age, suffer, and will die ISW as t/poorest man living in t/inner city of Rochester. Death is the great equalizer. It strips everything away that isn't eternal leaving everyone naked in their pitiful humanity.

Here's the difference: The poorest saint is richer than the wealthiest sinner. James 2:5==>

. . . did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Do you believe that? Do you? Then let's live like we believe it ("sov. joy of our salvation").

PRO 3:13-15 - 13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding. 14 For its profit is better than the profit of silver, And its gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her.

iv. Don't miss the parallel

. . . your faith being more precious than fine gold which is perishable, being purified through fire might pass the test and be found [true]

How do you test and purify Gold? Through fire. How do you test and purify true faith? Same way.

Common picture in t/OT. Patriarch Job, in t/book named for him 23:10 "But He knows the way I take; {When} He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Another way to look at it: Which is more valuable? Gold Ore or Pure, refined Gold? Which is more valuable - faith that is no more than crude ore or faith refined by fire that comes out true and pure?

Wonderful illustration in all of this. Ancient process of smelting gold. Crude gold ore would be put in a crucible (cf. our use of that word) where it would be heated to the point of boiling. The impurities would rise to the top whereby they would be skimmed off by the smith and discarded. It was said that when the metalworker could see his reflection in the pot he knew that his job was done.

JC the sovereign smith of our faith. As we are tried in the crucible of life, he is skimming off the sin and impurities from our lives. As he

skims off more and more he sees more and more of his reflection in us.

v. That's the end of verse 7==>

... to the praise and glory and honor of Jesus Christ at his coming.

There is some debate as to whether this refers to praise going to JC or from JC to faithful believers (reward). Not as out of place as it sounds at first. Paul speaks of "Glory, honor and peace" as t/reward of the elect in Romans 2:10. In same chapter he talks about God giving the believer praise.

So it could go either way ==>

your faith being more precious than fine gold which is perishable, being purified through fire might pass the test and be found [true] to the praise and glory and honor of Jesus Christ at his coming.

Even if rewards are in view we ultimately cast our crowns at the Savior's feet, so any praise we receive goes back to him.

How can we rejoice through our suffering? How can we have hope that goes the distance? Grounded in what God has done for us. He's given us a living hope in a living Savior // permanent inheritance // protection by his power // persevering faith in a Lord whom though we've never seen we love.

There's an apocryphal story that's told about a man asleep at night in his cabin when suddenly his room was filled with light and Jesus appeared before him. The Lord told the man he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might. This the man did, day after day. For many years he worked from sun up to sun down, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, rough surface of the unmoving rock, pushing with all his strength. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Seeing that the man was showing signs of discouragement, Satan decided to

enter the picture by accusing him with words such as: *"You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't budged. Why kill yourself over this? You are never going to move it."* Thus giving the man the impression that the task was impossible and that he was a failure.

These thoughts discouraged and disheartened the man even more. Why kill myself over this? he thought I'll just put in my time, giving just the minimum effort and that will be good enough." And that he planned to do until one day he decided to make it a matter of prayer and take his troubled thoughts to the Lord. "Lord," he said, "I have labored long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet after all this time, I have not even budged that rock one inch. What is wrong? Why am I failing?" To this the Lord responded compassionately, "My friend, when I asked you to serve me and you accepted I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to me, with your strength spent, thinking that you failed. But, is that really so? Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back sinewy and brown, your hands are calloused from constant pressure, and your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. Yet you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to be obedient and to push and to exercise your faith and trust in My wisdom. This you have done. "I, my child will move the rock."

Note the beatitudes in this regard. Cf. Luke's account.

Cf. 1 Tim. 1:17

1 Peter 1:13, 4:13.k Also 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:7; Luke 17:30.

εἰς ἔπαινον (ἔπαινος - praise * Accus. Masc. Sing.). Accus. of result.

καὶ δόξαν (--- opinion (always good in N.T.), hence praise, honor, glory * Accus. Fem. Sing.). Accus. of result.

καὶ τιμὴν (--- honor * Accus. Fem. Sing.). Accus. of result.

What is the theological significance of "at his coming?" Parallels the end of v. 5. The praise/honor/glory is specifically eschatological here. Could be that when Jesus returns we will return with him in a triumphal procession that testifies to the fact that we are overcomers (cf. concept of overcoming in John/Revelation, as well as the concept of the triumphal procession in 2 Cor.). Trials are always an indicator of true faith (cf. parable of the soils). Many profess faith in Christ for various reasons (profess vs. possess). Why we never rest easy when someone professes faith in Christ. That profession, from our limited perspective, does not mean that new birth has necessarily occurred. Esp. true when

someone is going through a difficult time. ("no atheists in foxholes" idea). How many make a superficial profession of X when they are going through some affliction. When the affliction eases or goes away their interest in t/things of Christ wane and disappear. "Jesus the Devine Skyhook" who lifts me out of my problems. "Pain plants the flag of reality on the fortress of a rebel heart."

ἐν ἀποκαλύψει (--- * Dative Fem. Sing.). Dative/Locative of time.

Idea that we may not know, this side of heaven, or ever, the reason for our trials and afflictions (again, Job).

Compare my diagram and the parallels in this passage.

It's sort of like a drowning man who cannot be killed. That's our faith/hope. It may be ravaged by t/raging waves of a tempest as a level 1 hurricane, but it cannot be finally and completely drowned. We bob up and down gasping for air, and God makes us to survive until his hand comes and gently lifts us from the stormy sea.

Peter speaks as one with experience (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3). Note Peter's difficulties (fears, denials, failings) and Jesus' prayer for him (Satan has demanded to sift you . . . but I have prayed . . .). Peter eventually crucified upside down.

"for as silver is without honor or value before it be refined, so . . . our faith is not to be honored and crowned by God until it be duly proved." [Calvin, 34]

JAM 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which {the Lord} has promised to those who love Him.

This week's Expositor's Quote is from Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981). He is preaching on 1 Peter 1:6-7:

Trials are essential . . . in order to show the genuineness of our faith. [Peter's] actual phrase is - "that the trial of your faith". Now 'trial' there means 'the attestation of it'. The picture he has in his mind is of a test being applied to something, and then after it has been tested a certificate is given. For instance the report on a ring might be, 'Yes, it is 18 carat gold'. That is what is meant by trial. He is not interested in the process as such; trial is the certificate of attestation, declaring the genuineness of our faith. The approved character of our faith is thus manifested. That is why these things happen to us.

Surely this is quite obvious. It is the way in which we endure trials that really certifies our faith. . . . There is nothing which so certifies the genuineness of a man's faith as his patience and his patient endurance, his keeping on steadily in spite of everything. . . .

There is nothing that is so wonderful in the life of the greatest saints as just that, the way in which they stood like rocks when others fell away round and about them. It is the glorious story of the Martyrs and the great Confessors. They had trials, but they just stood on what they knew to be God's truth without regard to the consequences, and they went on with their faith shining out gloriously. Now these things are happening to you, says Peter, that the genuineness of your faith may be perfectly evident to all.

Christians that fall away are no recommendation; those who start well but who do not continue disgrace the faith. The thing that shows the difference between the spurious and the real is the capacity to stand the test. . . .

Let me add just a word on what Peter says for our encouragement. . . . Although these things happen to us, yet they only happen 'for a season'. . . . These things come and go as God deems fit. We shall never be tried

and tested except it be for our good, and as we respond to the teaching, God will withdraw the test. . . . He is your loving Father, He knows how much you can take and stand. He will never send too much for you. He knows the right amount, and He will give the right amount, and when you have responded He will withdraw it. It is only 'for a season'. Do these words come to some downcast, heavy-laden Christian? Does all seem blackness and darkness? Are you not having the liberty you once had in prayer? Have you almost lost the faith you once had? Do not be troubled. You are in the hand of your Father. There may be a glorious period coming for you. He may have some great work for you to do. Do not be downcast, it is only 'for a season.' You are in the hands of your loving Father, so trust Him and go on. Keep on and say: 'I am content only to be in Thy hands.' [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 228-230]

James 1:1-3

HEB 12:7-11 - 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom {his} father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He {disciplines us} for {our} good, that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

ROM 5:3-4 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

Life is like that. It throws lots of blows our way. Periods of brokenness. God is about continually breaking us and shaping us to be more and more like Jesus Christ. Cf. my period of woe from 1999-2000 (church, car fire, dad fell bad concussion, pulled a dead kid out of a canal, went through a period of dark depression).

"The best lessons are learnt in affliction. A man never learns anything to profit while standing upon a lofty mountain. It is in the valley of humiliation, it is in the season of distress, trouble, anxiety, perplexity, and temptation, that a man learns the secrets of heavenly wisdom, for in them he learns his own folly, and that 'the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.'" [English preacher J.C.

Philpot, in a sermon preached on July 8, 1841, cited in "Spiritual Times and Seasons," Sermons by the late J.C. Philpot (Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 7 Brackendale Grove, Harpenden, Herts AL5 3EL, England, n.d.). 1:95-96.]

"Peter here (v. 4) reminds his readers that in the New Covenant, God's rewards are less material, physical, earthly. There is less emphasis on present material prosperity as a reward, for God has 'chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith' (Jas. 2:5), a statement which does not and could not appear in the OT). The enjoyment of physical health is also less prominent, for 'though our outer nature is wasting away our inner nature is being renewed every day' (2 Cor. 4:16). There is less emphasis too on freedom from persecution, for 'if you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you' (1 Pet. 4:14). Having many children is not regard in the New Testament as a necessary sign of God's favor, for both marriage and celibacy are his gifts (1 Cor. 7:7). Christians should not be dismayed at this relative lack of present material reward, however, for faith recognizes the New Covenant reward as something far greater: a present sufficiency for material needs (Phi. 4:19), a present spiritual fellowship with Christ (1 Peter 1:8), and a future inheritance both material and eternal, which is 'imperishable, undefiled, and unfading kept in heaven for you' (1 Pet. 1:4)." [Grudem, 59-60]

For the end of the next sermon? Summarize what we have learned about affliction (i.e. it is only for a while - 2 Cor. 4:17, we can experience joy in the midst of it, etc.). "The Christian is content to be tested, knowing that the length and intensity of the trial is in God's control, in the hands of his loving heavenly Father." [Leighton, 30]. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13.

Might save the following two sets of point for next message==>

Reasons why we go through trials and afflictions:

- a) Direct result of living in a fallen world (General sin/common to all men) - John 16:33. Luke 13:1-5.
- b) Personal Sin and Stupidity (Darwin Awards). Don't ask God to bless you if you are harboring sin in your life.
- c) God's Hand of Discipline (chastening - Hebrews 12, correction, training, Romans 5 testing). Cf. 1 Peter 4:17). Keep us from being entrapped by the world (if anyone loves the word . . . , cf. 1 Cor. 11:32).
- d) Demonic Attack (cf. Job, 1 Peter 5:8).

Reasons why we don't experience joy

- 1) Sin
- 2) ignorance
- 3) false expectations
- 4) lack of discipline.
- 5) Bad theology

". . . the key to Christian living is a thirst and hunger for God. And one of the main reasons people do not understand or experience the sovereignty of grace and the way it works through the awakening of sovereign joy is that their hunger and thirst for God is so small." [John Piper, The Swan is not Silent: Sovereign Joy in the Life and Thought of St. Augustine, 13]