

• True faith never fails – although there are temporary lapses

Can our faith fail? Yes and no. There are times when temporarily we fail to believe, and Jesus can say ‘Where is your faith?’ But true faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour never fails. The person born again by the Holy Spirit has been **given** faith. He may fail to apply it, but he always knows that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour.

• Faith is guarded

The Christian’s inheritance is guarded; he is guarded; ultimately even his faith is guarded! What would be the good of being guarded through faith if our faith were not guarded?

• The final stage of salvation

There is a final stage of salvation. It is ‘ready to be revealed in the last time’<sup>□1</sup>. There is a stage of salvation when we are vindicated and the life we have lived is honoured. At the moment the final glory is being secretly prepared as God’s people lay up treasure in heaven. One day the curtain will be drawn aside and we shall fully see and fully experience everything we have been living for.

□1 1:5

• Meanwhile – there is suffering

Meanwhile there may be suffering for the Christian. Peter goes on: ‘*In this [this expectation of a ready-to-be-revealed salvation] you are rejoicing, though now for a little while you may if it is necessary have to suffer various trials*<sup>□1</sup>. *The purpose of this is that what is genuine in your faith (which is more precious than gold which perishes) may after it has been tested by fire be found to turn out for praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ*<sup>□2</sup>’.

□1 1:6

□2 1:7

### 1. Trials and troubles are an inevitable part of the Christian life

• No escaping

• Painful

**1. Trials and troubles are an inevitable part of the Christian life.** Peter’s friends are already suffering. Peter is simply letting them know that there is nothing surprising about the troubles they are experiencing. Any view of the Christian faith that talks as if it abolishes troubles is a defective and distorted version. There is no way of escaping troubles. ‘In the world you shall have tribulation’, said Jesus. He has overcome them but that does not stop the Christian from facing times of trouble and pain. Christians have genuine feelings. Trials will come. Trials are likely to be ‘various’. At times they all seem to come at once! They are painful because they shake our view of God, because they undermine our self-confidence, and often there will be the added pain that comes from the fact that our friends do not understand what is happening to us.

### 2. Troubles are necessary for our spiritual progress

• Maturity

**2. Troubles come because from time to time they are necessary for our spiritual progress.** They are not accidental. God knows exactly what He is doing. They are temporary (‘now’), brief (‘for a little while’), varied (‘various trials’). Troubles can help us if they are received in the right way. They pull us up when we are getting careless. They perfect us. They bring us to maturity. They rebuke our slackness. They prepare us for greater experiences of God and greater usefulness in God’s kingdom.

### 3. Troubles rightly received purify our faith

**3. Troubles rightly received have the effect of purifying our faith.** ‘The purpose...’, says Peter ‘is that what is genuine in your faith... may, after it has been tested by fire, be found to turn out for praise...’. Christians are people who have put their trust in Jesus Christ, but our faith may be a weak thing. There may be a mixture of weakness, carnality and sinful self-centredness in it. There may be much foolishness, much that we think is the Holy Spirit, which really is the flesh. Suffering sorts out what really is of ‘sound quality’.

• Troubles test faith

Troubles test our faith. If we pretend to believe but do not (like Judas), our so-called 'faith' will very rapidly disappear in a time of trouble. 'In time of testing they **will** fall away', said Jesus – talking about people who had heard the word of God but whose faith was a pretence<sup>☞1</sup>.

☞1 Luke 8:13

• Troubles expand faith – we discover God's faithfulness

Troubles come because from time to time they are necessary for our maturity. They purify our faith. A lot of false ideas and carnal ways fall aside when we are driven close to God by the pain of troubles. At the same time we discover how faithful God is. Troubles expand our faith. They get us to learn how to lean more on God. They bring out persistence and patient faith. Gold is precious but it has to be purified to make it more precious.

**4. Troubles help us to get to our inheritance**

**4. Troubles help us to get to our inheritance.** They do not last forever but 'for a little while'. Peter says 'for a little while' we may have to suffer various trials. These testings of faith are the very things that are working for our inheritance. God is watching how we handle troubles. They lead eventually to reward. The 'praise and glory and honour' that Peter refers to does not only come to God; we share it. It is our praise, our glory and our honour.

**5. Troubles do not stop us rejoicing**

**5. Troubles do not stop us rejoicing.** Peter says: '*Even though you have not seen him, you love him. Although at this time you are not seeing him, you believe on him, and you rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory*'<sup>☞1</sup>. When we continue in faith despite trials and troubles, God gives us great joy. Think of the apostles when they were ill-treated<sup>☞2</sup>.

☞1 1:8

☞2 Acts 5:41

• God gives us great joy

• We have to persist



Troubles make us live by faith more than ever. We do not see all the answers. We have to persist in trusting Jesus who is invisible to us, because He is at the right hand of the Father. But God is capable of giving us great joy when we persist in faith.

**6. Troubles do not block our salvation**

**6. Troubles do not block our salvation.** Peter says: '*As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls*'<sup>☞1</sup>. No matter how painful the troubles may be, our faith anchors us to Jesus, and our salvation is sure. Our inheritance is guarded; we are guarded; our faith is guarded. Our salvation is sure.

☞1 1:9

• Salvation is sure

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