

# "Why Should I Suffer?"

1 Peter 1:6-7

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# connect groups

## PATH

One-third of the world population is presently on lockdown; they are restricted by their own governments and kept (by force if necessary) from gathering together in groups. Though infection rates from the coronavirus seem to vary from region to region, one thing is common to all: everyone is suffering in one way or another. But did you know that suffering can be a *good* thing in the hands of a good God? Consider four truths:

- I. Trials Are Multiple
- II. Trials Are Painful

- III. Trials Are Needful
- IV. Trials Are Remedial

## POINTS

### Why Should I Suffer?

- Though the early church faced different circumstances, there are principles we can learn from their suffering. Peter referred to suffering fifteen times in 1 Peter, which he wrote to Christians through the Roman Empire, all of whom were suffering.
- Biblical authors described this suffering. Struck by how fleeting everything he had worked for was, Solomon wrote, "Therefore I hated life" (Ecclesiastes 2:17). Jesus spoke about the distress of nations during troubled times (see Luke 21:25). Peter wrote of being "grieved by various trials" (v. 6). The word he used for *trials* means "hardship," "troubles," and "pressures of life." Many of us are experiencing trials. Peter said: "In this you greatly rejoice" (v. 6). What is he referring to? Don't we rejoice when the trial is over? And if we do suffer, aren't we more likely to ask why we've suffered?

### Trials Are Multiple

- Peter used the word *various* to describe the many trials Christians were facing. The Greek word translated *various* can mean "many-colored."
- The various trials we face come in different shades and hues, much like a

color chart. Some trials are big, others small; some are short, others prolonged. Christians are not immune to depression or exhaustion. Pain has many faces in Scripture:

- Physical trials (health problems are the most common—consider Job and Paul); emotional trials (David's psalms are filled with emotional stress; Elijah experienced stress and depression); spiritual trials (our agony over sin, guilt, doubt, or unfulfilled spiritual expectations)

### Trials Are Painful

- The truth of all trials is that they are painful. Peter used the word *grieved*, which means "distressed." It's the same word that describes Jesus' feelings in Gethsemane.
- Pain is normal and healthy, a valid response to hardship. Jesus had pain, Paul had pain, as did Job and Jeremiah. To deny your pain worsens the trial.

### Trials Are Needful

- Peter said that trials are necessary. "If need be, you have been grieved..." (v. 6).
- That tells us that there are special times when God knows we need trials because He is going to use them for something.

- Put another way, Peter is saying that we suffer according to God's will; He has a purpose for them (see 1 Peter 3:17 and 4:19). Why do we need trials?
  - They measure us: Trials are tests that reveal the depth of our faith (see v. 7). A faith that can't be tested is a faith that can't be trusted.
  - They correct us (see Psalm 119:6).
  - They strengthen us (see James 1:2-3).
  - Trials equip us (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

### Trials Are Remedial

- Peter used the image of gold. Goldsmithing purifies gold through smelting in the furnace; it refines. God isn't out to burn you, but to bless you; a blessing in the disguise of a burden. Job said, "He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I'll come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). God uses trials to shape us to the image of Jesus (see Romans 8:9).
- Do trials weaken you? Do they stiffen your spirit and harden heart? Or when things get hot do you release fragrance and add flavor? Stop telling God how big your storm is and start telling the storm how big your God is.

## PRACTICE

**Connect Up:** As Pastor Skip pointed out, the Bible is full of God's people going through trials. Even Jesus experienced suffering and pain, but from Jesus' death and resurrection came a new destiny, renewal, and restoration. How have trials in your life been used to refine you? What are some of the eternal truths you've learned through tribulation?

**Connect In:** As Pastor Skip pointed out in his teaching, The Quarantined Life, "the coronavirus isn't so much about the end of days in Revelation 13 as it is the healthy community practice of Leviticus 13. Therefore, let's act according to 1 Corinthians 13 (love) until Romans 13 runs its course (government protection)." Discuss the differences between a "Leviticus 13" crisis and the "Revelation 13" tribulation. Discuss these chapters. What is one of the common factors? According to premillennial eschatology, the church is in one, and not the other. Since we are in a Leviticus 13 predicament, what is the role of the church and government (see Romans 13)?

**Connect Out:** Using Pastor Skip's points (trials are multiple, painful, needful, and remedial), how would you discuss the trials of a believer's life with a non-believer? How would you answer his or her question as to why God allows evil, pain, and suffer? (Discuss Norman Geisler's perspective: <http://normangeisler.com/category/problem-of-evil/>.)