

# Trials and Temptations

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 June 2017

Preacher: Peter Adam

[ 0 : 00 ] Now, God has given most of us two ears, one right ear and one left ear. And the reason for that is that we should listen to sermons with two ears.

We should listen with one ear for ourselves and the other ear for other people. Because don't you find when someone talks to you, think, oh, they ask you a question.

You think, oh, I heard a sermon about that just recently. And God's provided something for you to say to them from the sermon you heard two weeks ago. So please think this morning that you're listening for yourself.

I hope you are. But also think, well, God might be teaching me something today which I can use to help somebody else next week. Well, we're so thankful for these words of the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter chapter 1.

So let's pray that God, the Holy Spirit, who spoke them and wrote them, will bring them home to our hearts and lives. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Spirit's work in writing the scriptures.

[ 1 : 06 ] Please, by your Spirit, write these words of 1 Peter in our hearts and lives. And bring them to our minds and to our lips to encourage others.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I want to ask you a question.

Have you been born again to a living hope? Does the living hope of Christ's return fill your mind and your heart and your prayers and your expectations?

Peter tells us, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he's given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And then to help us understand what that living hope is, he describes it as an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

[ 2 : 22 ] Are you aware when you wake up in the morning that you have a glorious future ahead of you? And does that hope, that certainty, excite you and enrich you and stimulate you and shape the way you live your life?

Have you been born again to a living hope? It is, Peter says, it can never perish, that is, it will last forever.

It will never spoil, that is, it will never decay. And it will never fade. It will never lose its luster, its glory.

I must confess I spent the first 15 years of my Christian life not thinking about the future, the living hope at all. I thought, well, if I think back about the past and what God did in Old Testament times and the coming of the Lord Jesus and his mighty death and resurrection, that'll be enough for me. I didn't worry about the future. And then I happened to be preaching through 1 Peter and I found these words in 1 Peter 13. Set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

[ 3 : 47 ] So there was a clear instruction. I had to set my hope somewhere other than in the past. I had to set my hope in the future when Jesus Christ would be revealed. I thought in my vanity and foolishness that I could live a Christian life without having hope about the future, without having this living hope that Peter is talking about.

I was deluded. I was wrong, wasn't I? Because God has provided this living hope to sustain us as believers. And if you're trying to live without a living hope, then let me tell you, you're in trouble.

I've watched people dying many times. And it's a lovely sight to see a Christian dying with living hope. And sad to see a Christian dying without living hope.

And we will die as we live. So you better start learning to live with living hope now. Of course, the world says this is ridiculous.

The world says this is just pie in the sky when you die. The world says that you're so heavenly minded you're of no earthly use. But God says you need to be heavenly minded to be of earthly use.

[ 5 : 25 ] You have to think beyond this life. You have to think beyond tomorrow and next year and your life in this world. You have to think beyond this world to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to be of earthly use.

Why else would God in his mercy have made us born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? By God's mercy and by Jesus' resurrection, we have been born again to a living hope.

And this, I think, is an essential ingredient of Christianity which is missing from the church in the West.

If you go to the persecuted church, you'll find living hope there, won't you? If you go to the Middle East and talk to Christians there who were just facing the climax of 300 years' persecution, you'll find their living hope.

They have no other hope. When you lose your home and your family and your possessions and your wealth and you face losing your life, you're stuck with living hope or no hope, aren't you?

[ 6 : 46 ] But what they know, we don't know. That without living hope, we have no hope. I have just turned 70 for the first time.

And lots of my contemporaries are walking around talking about bucket lists. Do you know what a bucket list is? It's the kind of things you have to do before you die, the places you have to see, the people you have to meet and so on.

And I keep saying to them, forget about your bucket. Don't think you have to do everything before you die. Because the new heavens and the new earth will be so wonderful, you won't spend your eternity thinking, I wish I'd gone to Hawaii or something like that.

God will be so glorious, you won't think, missed opportunities. No, we have to fill our lives with living hope, lest we try and pack every good thing into this life.

What a foolish thing that would be. As C.S. Lewis pointed out, we're often, aren't we like children who have been offered a day at the seaside but spend our day making mud pies instead.

[ 8 : 08 ] Our desires, he says, are not strong enough. They're too weak. We're not desiring the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, not looking forward to the living hope. Now, I go to the doctor quite often, as you do when you turn 70.

Indeed, it seems to fill most of my time. And mostly I go when I've got a symptom. I say, you know, my foot's just fallen off. Is this a sign of some, you know, problem? And the doctor says, oh, it's not common for your age, so don't worry about that.

We'll tie it on. Everything will be all right. But, of course, the greater danger is when he says, now, is this happening to you? And I say, oh, yes. He said, well, that's a symptom of a serious disease.

I hadn't noticed anything was wrong, but he says, oh, no, this is really serious. And let me tell you, lack of living hope is a symptom of a serious disease.

Lack of living hope is a symptom of a serious disease. If you suffer from this disease, please listen to this sermon very carefully, and please read 1 Peter 1 very carefully.

[ 9 : 19 ] You need it. It's medicine you need. Today. It's medicine you'll need throughout your life. I love the story of Adoniram Judson, who was an American missionary to Burma, and at one stage he was captured and was about to be killed for being a Christian.

And they said to him, what do you think of your future now? And his reply was this glorious reply. My future is as bright as the promises of God. Isn't that a great reply?

You know, you might need that reply one day, because one day, one day, you might hear a knock on the church door as the persecutors come in, and they say, well, you've got two options.

You can deny Christ and leave safely, or you can stay and die. That's what's happening in the Middle East now.

Well, why shouldn't it happen in Glasgow or Melbourne, Australia? It's the normal state of the Christian church over the last 2,000 years.

[ 10 : 38 ] It's not impossible. It could happen here. If it doesn't happen in your lifetime, it may well happen in the lifetime of your children. That's why living hope is so important.

And notice what Peter does with this theme of living hope. He says, in all of this, verse 6, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, you've had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

And what living hope does is to enable us to survive trials with less grief and more joy. These trials have come that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

[12:05] You see, if all your eggs are in one basket, if you think this life is all there is, then a trial will be a tragedy, won't it? But if your focus is on your living hope, then your daily trials, whatever they are, will not be tragedies, but triumphs.

It is a radically different viewpoint, a radically different attitude to the trials and difficulties of life. It requires of you, if you don't have a living hope, a major turnaround, a major repentance.

I'm giving you an annual medical, you see. You know what your diseases are, but I'm telling you a disease you may not know about. I'm telling you about it so that you can do something about it.

I'm just your friendly GP. You're paying for this, you might as well enjoy it. Because what living hope enables is joy in trials.

Without living hope, trials are painful and not productive. With living hope, trials are productive.

[13:21] Without living hope, trials are pointless. With living hope, trials are purposeful. And these various kind of trials, Peter says, these have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

See, if you say to God, strengthen my faith, how will God do it except by sending a trial of your faith? It's a bit like saying to God, make me fit, but I don't want to do any exercise.

To get fit, you need to do exercise, don't you? To become a person of faith, you need your faith to be tried, tested. God is testing our faith, not to break us, but to prove us.

Isn't that wonderful when God says, boasts of Job? He says to Satan, have you considered my servant Job? He boasts about Job's faithfulness.

And throughout the book of Job, Job may find it hard to trust God, but God trusts Job every inch of the way because he knows that Job will persist in his faith throughout every trial.

[14:37] Isn't that extraordinary? Well, God has the same faith in you, whatever trials he sends you. He sends those trials not to break you, not to destroy your happiness, but to prove the genuineness of your faith and to strengthen your faith.

We're so often discouraged by trials, Peter says we should be encouraged by them. That's a shock, isn't it? Everyone else is running away as fast as they can from suffering.

But Peter says, in God's world, for those who are born again to a living hope, suffering is not the disaster, the tragedy. You see, happiness is so ephemeral, isn't it?

So fleeting. We had a wonderful story in our newspapers in Australia of a lady who was running in a marathon, the kind of thing I often do before breakfast myself.

Anyway, she was only going to run a half marathon, which I think is a bit wimpish, but anyway, she took the wrong turning at the halfway point and ran the whole marathon by mistake, as you might do, and she won it.

[15:46] Isn't that pretty good? That's pretty good, I reckon, to win a marathon without meaning to run it. I think that's really, that's my aim in life before I die. But you see, I think most Christians are running a happiness marathon, not a holiness marathon.

And if you're running a happiness marathon, then every trial is a frustration. If you're running a holiness marathon, every trial is a gracious gift of a loving Heavenly Father.

Isn't that extraordinary? If you're running a happiness marathon, every trial is a tragedy. If you're running a holiness marathon, and I hope you are, then every trial is a gracious gift of a loving Heavenly Father, which is why James says, count it all joy when you meet various trials.

You see, we Christians in the West, we have our own version of the prosperity gospel. Not that we'll be immensely rich, it won't be too gross and embarrassing. Not that we can pray for a wonderful car and lots of holidays and so on.

That's the kind of promise which is often made in the two-thirds world to Christians, the prosperity gospel. But we have our kind of own middle-class prosperity gospel, which is not that we would be tremendously wealthy, but that we would be permanently happy and contented and life would be without trials.

[ 17 : 28 ] well, what trials are you meeting in your Christian life? What trials or tests are you meeting in your work situation?

What trials or tests are you meeting in your marriage? What trials is this church undergoing or about to undergo in God's kind providence?

Why would God send trials to a church? Why? To grow our faith and to make sure that we focus on our living hope, not on this life for our joy and satisfaction.

And as in Peter's Day, I think the greatest trials will come from the world around us and as our society decays and dissolves around us, so the opposition to Christianity will increase, I'm sure. Our governments in Australia are tolerant of everything except Christianity. How remarkable that is. And of course, governments and the society won't mind what we believe about God.

[ 18 : 40 ] You can believe God is a rabbit, they don't mind as long as you don't make such a fuss about it. But what they don't like is our moral values and our view of humanity. I was involved in a court case in Australia a number of years ago.

It was a court case against a Christian campsite group because they wouldn't let an active gay group use the campsite. And I was involved in the trial as a witness an expert witness.

And the thing which the judge could not believe was that I thought that we should let God decide what we do. That was just incomprehensible to her.

She just couldn't imagine that any sane person would think that we should let God dictate the way we live. because of course what our society has done is say well there's no God so we're our own gods.

We create our own lives. We create our own reality. We create our own moral values. We create our own gender. We create our own view of what marriage is. We create our own sense of worth.

[ 19 : 50 ] And what an intolerable pressure to put on a young teenager by the way to say create yourself when the greatest philosophers can't manage it. But that's the world in which we live.

It's an unreal world of course. A world very far from God. These come so that the genuineness the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire may result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

The most taunting question I've ever been asked at a preaching conference I often speak at preaching conferences was given me not by a person but you know given me through somebody else.

It was a question from a retired minister and listen to the question will I be bitter for eternity because of the trials and tribulations I've experienced in my Christian ministry?

They say it again will I be bitter for eternity because of the trials and tribulations I've experienced in Christian ministry? What a question. So I thought and prayed for 24 hours before giving my answer I hadn't met him so I had to give a public answer my answer was when Jesus says well done good and faithful servant all your bitterness will disappear will dissolve is that right?

[ 21 : 35 ] will Jesus' words well done good and faithful servant be enough to satisfy you for eternity?

Will Jesus' words well done good and faithful servant be enough to satisfy the woman or the man or the child who is facing death for Jesus' sake today at this moment somewhere around the world?

The answer is yes because we've been born again to not a lost cause but a let's say it together a living hope notice Peter doesn't say they don't experience grief he says you do suffer grief in all kind of trials he doesn't say the grief doesn't happen but he says the grief is not all that is now I must tell you that I the last mathematics exam I did I got five out of a hundred which even I could work out with my limited mathematical ability wasn't a very good mark and I suspect it was for a neat margin but here's some simple mathematics

I've written down less hope more grief less joy do you understand that?

less living hope more grief in trials and less joy in trials here's the other formula I think we mathematicians call it more hope less grief more joy does that make sense?

[ 23 : 56 ] the more hope you have the less grief not no grief but less grief in your trials but more joy and what a future that the genuineness of your faith may result in praise glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed yes that's the praise glory and honour of Jesus but I think it's also praise glory and honour for yourself it is Jesus' words well done good and faithful servant for we suffer with him now as Paul says that we might reign with him in glory so here's a great prayer to pray guard me in my grief that my faith may be strengthened that I might love you

Lord Jesus guard me in my grief in my trials that my faith may be strengthened and that I might love you and in all of this as Peter points out we're just actually following the Lord Jesus himself because he talks later on in verse 11 about the sufferings of Christ and the glories that follow one of the great themes in Peter's letter is that we're following Christ's example we Christians walk in his steps he goes through sufferings and then goes to glory so we follow the same pathway through suffering to glory now one of the great pleasures of my life is to love reading church history and the reason is I love meeting Christians who aren't like me and Christians in the second century don't live the kind of life I lead don't live in the kind of world I live and they don't have the assumptions

I have and one of the striking things about Christians in the past is how differently they viewed suffering and trials so here's a remarkable story of a minister in the 18th century his wife had died and he was raising his five children in the north of England and he promised them one morning that he would show them that evening the most interesting sight in the world and of course the children were I can imagine saying well why can't we go now and you know what is it daddy and so on well he took them to a hovel where there was a young man whose name was Abraham Midwood was dying in great pain and in poverty extraordinary thing to do to take your children to that isn't it he brought these children of course by arrangement with Abraham Midwood and here's what he took the children into the hovel and he said to the man who was lying there on his bed dying Abraham I've brought my children here to show them that it's possible to be happy in a state of disease and poverty and want what a remarkable lesson for a father to teach his children he said tell them if it is not so what a brave thing to say to a dying man and what a remarkable thing by the way to bring middle class children to a poor man dying in a hovel what could you learn from that's a very odd thing to do in the 18th century I tell you what could you learn from the poor here's Abraham's reply oh yes sir I would not change my state with that of the richest person upon earth who was destitute of those views which I possess sir I am truly happy and trust to be happy and blessed throughout eternity and even now I thank God who brought me from a state of darkness into his marvelous light and has given me to enjoy the unsearchable riches of his grace what an extraordinary lesson for a child to learn that you can be perfectly happy with nothing have you learned that lesson could you lose everything and be happy in God you've been born again to a living hope that should fill your mind and meet all your needs well here's the great evangelist George Whitefield an evangelist here in Britain and Scotland and England and Ireland and North America he went to university as a 17 year old recently converted to Christ and here is his account in his journal of his first trials as a believer but when religion began to take root in my heart and I was fully convinced my soul must totally be renewed I was visited with outward and inward trials I incurred the displeasure of the master of the college who threatened to expel me my relations counted my life madness I daily underwent some contempt at college some have thrown dirt at me two friends forsook me listen to his comments on these trials these he says though little were useful trials that is he benefited from them they inured me to contempt lessened self love and taught me to die daily what great lessons and he wouldn't have learnt them would he without the trials let me finish with a prayer request from the church in the

[ 30 : 30 ] Middle East listen very carefully to this prayer request it's not what you expect please don't pray for us please pray with us if you pray for us you'll pray for the wrong thing you'll pray for our safety isn't that the first thing it's the first thing I do pray for the Christians in the Middle East I pray for their safety but if you pray with us you'll ask God to bring millions to faith in Christ you'll pray that whenever the inevitable backlash comes because of our witness we'll be faithful even if it costs us our lives let me read it again please don't pray for us please pray with us if you pray for us you'll pray for the wrong things you'll pray for safety but if you pray with us you'll ask

God to bring millions to faith in Christ you'll pray that when the inevitable backlash comes because of our witness we'll be faithful even if it costs us our lives you'll pray you'll pray you'll pray you've been to the doctor the doctor's diagnosed your problem he's told you what you need what do you need living some people some people have heard this you need what do you need you need living what do you need say it to God we need now God please give us we need we need living hope when now and forever don't you till that great moment when the Lord Jesus returns and hope is swallowed up in joy let's pray together

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we want to praise you because in your great mercy you have given us new birth into a living hope to the resurrection of Jesus Christ your son from the dead and you've given us an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade this inheritance is kept in

heaven for us as we through faith are shielded by your power until the coming of the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time in this heavenly father we greatly rejoice though now for a little while we have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials but we thank you that these trials have come so that the proven genuineness of our faith of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire may result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus

Christ is revealed we have not seen him but we love him and even though we don't see him now we believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy for receive we are receiving the result of our faith the salvation of our souls God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ our heavenly father we praise you in Jesus name please sustain us in this living hope for your mercy's sake  
amen