

Living Triumphantly Through Our Trials

1 Peter 1:1

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1 Peter 1:1 (KJV)

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, *to the strangers scattered throughout* Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

These words press like cold steel against our hearts. Without little effort, they invoke a mental picture of isolation, fear, and loneliness. In reality, they are Peter's words written to a persecuted church whose members were forced to live apart from the people and things they loved and found familiar.

Adversity, sorrow, and disappointment often are the avenues that God uses to stretch our faith and cause us to dig deeper into our understanding of His sovereignty. The truth remains that there will never be a time when we are totally free of tribulation. We live in a fallen world.

Life for members of the New Testament church was no different. The church was born out of great adversity. However, it thrived and refused to become discouraged even when circumstances turned adverse. Nothing, not even a deranged Roman emperor, could curtail or prevent its growth. The reason—New Testament believers had **"a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"** ([1 Peter 1:3](#)).



They also had a keen understanding of who they were and whom they served. The focus of their hearts was not set on their present situation. Instead, their spiritual gaze was set on Jesus Christ—**"the author and perfecter of [their] faith"** ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). While the unsaved world rejected them and viewed them as being people without a home, God embraced them as beloved children and heirs to His kingdom.

How did adversity find them? Once Jesus had been crucified, Jewish and Roman officials drew a sigh of relief. They actually believed another political faction had been overthrown. Therefore, they could relax. When news of Christ's resurrection began to circulate through Jerusalem, government and religious leaders sought ways to divide and destroy the early church. Their goal was to keep Christianity from spreading. Believers were persecuted and, in many cases, put to death.

Nero blamed even the slightest disturbance on Christian believers. Finally, he ordered them out of Jerusalem, which led to their relocation throughout northern Asia Minor. They were Christians without homes, who, like Israel of old, were scattered throughout the world.

Peter's letter offered words of hope and encouragement to those who were dealing with a seemingly hopeless situation. But He easily could have been talking to us. He did not dodge the difficulty of their situation. ***He understood their sorrow and made every effort to help them understand the outcome of their faith, which was the salvation of their souls.*** ([1 Peter 1:9](#))

These early believers did not know it, but God was positioning them to fulfill the Great Commission. Jesus had instructed His followers to take the Gospel message to the entire world. However, they had

retreated to familiar territory—Jerusalem and the temple grounds. Familiarity may feel safe, but God rarely allows us to stay in this type of environment for long periods of time. He wants to stretch our faith and grow us into people who reflect His strength, mercy, and grace to others.

But adversity invades our emotions with feelings of insecurity and fear. In times of stress and difficulty, if the focus of our lives shifts to anything other than Jesus Christ, we easily could face a spiritual firestorm.

Even after the coming of God's Spirit, the early church remained centered in Jerusalem. The way the Gospel message spread was through the persecution of the church. God did not cause His people to be persecuted. But He used the adversity to strengthen the hearts of believers while spreading the testimony of His eternal love and forgiveness to a lost world. When these believers were forced to leave Jerusalem, their love for God, His Son, and the Gospel went with them.

God has promised to provide **beauty for ashes** ([Isaiah 61:3](#) NIV). He takes our sorrows and turns each one into blessings.

The way you respond to the trials of life reveals the level of your faith. Peter writes, "**You have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**" ([1 Peter 1:6-7](#)).

God may never reveal all the reasons for our sorrows, **but He promises to use each one for our good and His glory.** ([Romans 8:28](#)) Therefore, we can trust Him because we know that His thoughts are greater than our thoughts, and He has a plan, even for the hurts we suffer.

God has a lifetime of blessings waiting for you. However, not all of them will come as a result of facing life's sorrows well. Joy and hope also come as a natural overflow of life. How do you prepare for the trials that come your way? There are five steps:

1. Remove all hindrances to your devotion to Christ. David prayed, "**Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way**" ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)). Ask God to expose anything within you that is displeasing to Him. Be willing to let go of attitudes that you have held within your heart, especially if they involve sin or lack of forgiveness toward another person.

In fact, forgiving those who have hurt you can be the most profitable action you can take. You may have been hurt wrongly—even abused, but God wants to set you free from a lack of forgiveness. He forgives you and calls you to do the same. The actions of the person who hurt you may be entirely wrong.

God does not want you to deny this. He only wants you to be free of bitterness and revenge. This begins with you forgiving what seems to be unforgivable. You may not need to go to that person. Pray and allow God to minister to your broken heart.

2. Resolve to keep a balance in your judgment. Be steady and watchful. Don't assume that just because you feel a certain way that your feelings are correct. Feelings may or may not line up with the Word of God, and that is your chalk line—the Bible.

It is normal to ask God to change or remove your suffering. However, He may not do this immediately. It is not because His love for you has changed.

Death, sorrow, and disease are a part of your existence. Also some consequences to sin cannot be reversed. But there is never an instance where God is unaware of your plight. He knows, cares, and because He loves you, He will rescue you from feelings of doubt and hopelessness. All you have to do is pray and ask for His intervention.

3. *Recognize that your hope is in Jesus Christ.* He is your Shepherd, and He leads you through every trial. You do not face life alone. He does not pick and choose when to guide you through a difficulty. Every trial you face, He faces with you, and each difficulty provides the perfect opportunity for Him to reveal more of Himself to you.

4. *Resist the temptation to return to your former lifestyle.* After the Crucifixion, Peter and the others returned to their former occupation—fishing. Jesus had called them to be "fishers of men" but somehow they allowed temptation to draw them away from what was true and right. Satan has one desire when it comes to the life of a believer—discouragement. He knows if he can discourage you, he may have a chance to tempt you to give up and walk away from God.

Jesus knew the need of these former fishermen. He also knew where to find them, and that is where He went—the Sea of Galilee. He did not scold them. He appeared to them and offered them something to eat. Jesus heals our hurts with His grace and boundless love. The moment these men saw their Savior, they knew they were in the wrong place, and they corrected their attitudes and the direction of their lives. Each one became a fisher of men: James, Peter, John, and the others.

5. *Realize that holiness is the only acceptable goal for the believer.* Life's sorrows, disappointments, and trials are the purifying fires that God uses to cleanse our souls of sin and fleshly dross. In the end and by His providential will, we emerge from the trial refined as gold.

Holiness is God's goal for our lives. There is only one way for this to take place and that is through our submission to His Spirit and His plan for our lives. There may be days when we wonder how we will be able to continue. The truth is that we can't. Only with God and by His grace are we able to face life triumphantly.