

Facing the Storms

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My wife and I are coming up on our forty-ninth anniversary. And usually between couples, one of us is a teaser. And in our situation, that's me. Most of the time she takes it with a pretty good humor and after, forty-nine years, evidently she's not going to give up on me to soon.

But one of the little things that we go through is she will break a fingernail. And I'll go through the little thing where "Do you want me to call 911?" And I asked her the other day, I said, "If you break more than one, do we have to perform triage to figure out which one to save and which to...."

It [adds] a little bit of humor there, but the point is: We have those little things and we have bigger things in our lives. We have all kinds of trials that come to us. Sometimes we know they are there. Sometimes we know they are coming and sometimes they just happen. We wake up one morning and we have a problem. We have some kind of an issue going.

So, the title that I have come up with for this revised version is Facing the Storms. Many, many sermons have been produced, been given about the storms of life and this is kind of a takeoff on that.

Recently I was reading. I did a series in Prosser on the Parables. And in doing that you are going through the gospels. You see all the issues and all the problems that the disciples went through. And I couldn't help but notice how much the same kind of trials that they went through, the things they faced in their lives—the persecutions and all that—we can relate to because, to some degree or another, the same things affect us. We have all those accounts where the disciples were very discouraged at times. They were fearful. They were disheartened. They were depressed probably. They lost hope at different times. And that can happen to us too.

We can also see another thing and the most important thing. It's like Les was talking about. If we can see the lessons that are in those things, then we can glean those things for ourselves and apply those to our lives. That's what I'd like to do today—to look at some of the examples that we have on facing the trials and facing the things that we go through in life.

The first place, I'd like to go is over to Psalm 25 because here is a Psalm of David. It says that right there in the title if you have a heading in your Bible, like I do in my New King James. And I'll be using the New King James throughout. But this is a Psalm of David. And David is in great distress here.

Les mentioned Psalm 51. We know what David was going through there but he kind of bought a good part of his own troubles there. Yet, he was a man after God's own heart. He turned back to God after he knew, when he realized what he had done and he needed to face up to that.

But in Psalm 25 beginning in verse 1, there it says it is a Psalm of David. And he is in distress.

Psalm 25:1. *To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.*

2) *O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me.*

3) *Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. (NKJ)*

Sometimes there are trials. Sometimes there are issues that come from multiple directions. And David was affected by that in every way, politically and every other way. Verse 4:

Psalm 25:4. *Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths.*

5) *Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.*

And going down to verse 9:

Psalm 25:9. *The humble [or the meek] He guides in justice, and the [meek] He teaches His way. (NKJ)*

When David was proud, when he was determined to commit the sin that he did (And we have that one account.), he was not teachable. And we're like that whenever we're affected by pride or some other carnal issue in our lives.

Going down to verse 12 and this is the point I want to get at there.

Psalm 25:12. *Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way He [God] chooses. (NKJ)*

So, God is the one who chooses the directions that our lives are going to take.

A lot of times we think that we'll go ahead; that we have complete control of our lives. I think we've all listened to different people. It used to be back in the days when we had a lot of pop psychology and all that: How to organize your life, how to organize your life and you'll be a huge success financially and in every other way.

I remember the saying one time that "Man plans and God laughs." And that's true because things don't usually work out the way we think they are, just like David.

And the word *teach* here, if we looked at that word closely, if we wanted to analyze it, there are different various meanings to that. One of the things it implies is skill. And skill is always the product of experience. You don't gain skill in anything and we know, since we've been called and since we have started on a path that God has given us to live His way of life, we know we've gained experience in that. So, in a sense, we've gained skill in doing that.

Let's go back to the disciples. If you would, be turning over to John 6. We'll look at some of the things they faced, some of the emotions involved because they're not so much different than the same ones that we have.

Over in John 6, beginning in verse 1—and this is a literal storm here. This is the account where the disciples are on the Lake of Galilee and they're caught in a storm. They're waiting on Christ. He wasn't with them at this particular time. He came to them later. But let's begin in verse 1 of John 6.

John 6:1. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. (NKJ)*

That's a town on the west side of the Sea of Galilee named after one of the Roman Emperors—Tiberias. These guys like to have things named after them just like our politicians do today with streets, cities, towns, buildings, libraries, all that other nonsense named after them.

Verse 2:

John 6:2. *Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.*

3) *And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.*

4) *Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.*

5) *Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"*

6) *But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.*

7) *Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."*

8) *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,*

9) *"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"*

10) *Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. (NKJ)*

Now, it was springtime. It was Passover time.

John 6:10b. *So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.*

11) *And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much*

as they wanted.

12) So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." (NKJ)

It's interesting. You'll read some commentators and they will try to rationalize away all of the miracles that Christ performed. And one of the things they say here is "There really was enough food. And when they collected the whole, everybody kind of chipped in." That's nonsense as it goes on to say here. Verse 13:

John 6:13. *Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.*

14) *Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."*

15) *Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again... (NKJ)*

He left there. Under Roman rule and law at that time that was a very dangerous thing for someone to rise up. The Romans were always worried about rebellions and they usually put those things down very quickly. But it wasn't in God's Plan for Him to be arrested at that point. Verse 16:

John 6:16. *Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,*

17) *got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. (NKJ)*

He wasn't with them at this point.

John 6:18. *Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. (NKJ)*

It was getting rough.

John 6:19. *So when they had rowed about three or four miles, (NKJ)*

No Evinrude's then. No Johnson's. No Mercury's. They rowed three or four miles.

John 6:19b. *...they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. (NKJ)*

They were afraid because of the storm and they were afraid because He was defying gravity. They had never seen anything like that. It scared them to death. Verse 20:

John 6:20. *But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."*

21) *Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going. (NKJ)*

This is John's version of that, but I'd like to turn over to Matthew 14. Actually, John, Matthew and Mark have an account of this. In Matthew 14 beginning in verse 22, it's kind of picking up here where Christ was thronged. They wanted to make Him a king and then in verse 22 of Matthew 14, it begins:

Matthew 14:22. *Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.*

23) *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. (NK)*

He needed to be by Himself.

Matthew 14:22b. *Now when evening came, He was alone there.*

24) *But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. (NKJ)*

Which can be very scary! I know I've mentioned it before, but I spent a number of years in the Navy and I've seen, actually I've seen the screws on aircraft carriers come out of the water. And you're talking about a hundred foot plus seas. That really gets hairy. A lot of times I was always on destroyers. I spent over four years on destroyers. Nobody could go above decks the storms were so bad. It can be really scary. Verse 25:

Matthew 14:25. *Now in the fourth watch of the night... (NKJ)*

That's 3 a.m. to sunrise.

Matthew 14:25b. *Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.*

26) *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.*

27) *But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; [don't] be afraid."*

28) *And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."*

29) *So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.*

30) *But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; (NKJ)*

The fear got him. It finally got him.

Matthew 14:31. *...and [he began] to sink he [told Christ], "save me!"*

31) *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (NKJ)*

He knew they didn't have much faith to go on at that point. Not yet.

Mathew 14:32. *And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.*

33) *Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." (NKJ)*

Mark's account adds a little bit to that. I'd like to go over to Mark 4 to get the whole picture here because Mark adds a little bit to this. Over in Mark 4 beginning in verse 37 where it says:

Mark 4:37. *And a great windstorm arose, (NKJ)*

Christ was not with them. He was up on the mountain. One translation says it was a "hurricane force wind."

Mark 4:37b. *...and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. (NKJ)*

They were being swamped. There was no flotation in the seats back then. When it filled full of water, it was going to sink just like a steel boat will today, just like they learned on the Titanic. If you get enough water in it, you're going to lose that buoyancy and it's going to sink. It's going to go down. And they were afraid of that. They knew that. I'm sure, being fisherman and living on the lake, I'm sure they had seen other boats sink. There is probably more than one boat lying on the bottom of the Lake of Galilee. Verse 38:

Mark 4:38. *But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow [at that point]. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that [we're going to drown;] we are perishing?" (NKJ)*

A lot of times we will get in the same situation. We think that God isn't there. We have the example here where Christ stuck out His hand to Peter's and He lifted him up. He saved Him. But a lot of times we will think the same thing. "I'm hurting. I'm in a lot of pain. I'm in a trial here. I've got a lot of issues going on. Don't You care?" We're going to go on to see that He does very much so. He gives us a lot of hope, a lot of comfort, and a lot of encouragement. Verse 39:

Mark 4:39. *Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.*

40) *But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (NKJ)*

In the margin, if you have a margin in your Bible, it probably will say "Have you still no faith?" because of all of the things they saw. They yet didn't have enough to run on. The fear, the emotion overwhelmed them. They couldn't handle it. Verse 41:

Mark 4:41. *And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (NKJ)*

Let's go back over to Matthew and pick up a little more of this because the story expands. They were in the storm. He saved them. They were actually learning something. They were in the process, actually on the very threshold of learning the lessons they were going to need for the remainder of their lives. That's kind of at the same point that we are whenever we're baptized, whenever we're called by God, whenever we repent, and make that contract with God that we will change and go His way.

But over in Matthew 16, it expands a little bit on what was happening in the same context as the storm. In verse 5 of Matthew 16, it says:

Matthew 16:5. *Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.*

6) *Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."*

7) *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."*

8) *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"*

9) *"Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?"*

10) *"Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?"*

11) *"How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

12) *Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (NKJ)*

In other words, what He was telling them about the doctrine, the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, He's telling them "Don't practice your beliefs the way they do." He was going to teach them just like He taught David, just like He taught many of the Old Testament and the folks in the New Testament right down to our time, just like He taught them. It's just like that Psalm says where David says, "Teach me Your ways," because he had let go of those. He had drifted away. He certainly didn't want them to be the kind of hypocrites that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were.

But we have to ask ourselves a couple of questions here. Are these things recorded just because they happened a long time ago? Just because we have the record of them that happened somewhere in a far-off land is there no meaning to us? Or are they just isolated events? Or are there lessons?

One view, if you read many commentaries, one view of Christ walking on the water is this is representative of Christ whenever there is a storm that comes into our lives. It [represents] the times when we have doubts. We have the problems. We have the issues in our lives. We have those contrary winds that we face because it happens from

time to time. And those things just buffet us, knock us around. And if we don't have anything else to stand on, it's tough for us not to be afraid.

It just seems like sometimes life is such a desperate struggle with ourselves, the circumstances we find ourselves in with our own temptations, with our sorrows, with our own decisions sometimes. As David learned and the disciples learned, we can get in a lot of trouble. When those dark clouds surround us (the problems, the issues that we might have), we get overwhelmed by that. And on the surface, just like the disciples, ("We don't have enough bread. The waves are high. This boat is going to sink!"), we can do the same thing. We can easily forget the things that we know that God has done for us because I don't know about you, but I think personally that my own personal miracle is that God called me. And I think all of us will acknowledge that to ourselves.

The point there is that: Christ knows exactly what is going on. God the Father knows exactly what is going on with us all the time. And They do care!

Just like we have this account of all the things that they [the disciples] recently witnessed, they still went right to the viewpoint of "We don't have enough food for everybody. Everything is overwhelming us and we can't handle it!" The point there is that: We really can't handle it by ourselves a lot of times anyway. Granted at that point, the disciples were only beginning to understand.

He wasn't calling them "Idiots" because they didn't have enough faith. He knew that they just didn't have much at that point. It builds. You accumulate that as we go through, as we live God's way of life, and as we experience the things that happen to us, as we survive all those things that happen to us. Just like the people that always wanted the free food, they wanted the instant healing an all of that.

But Christ wanted His disciples to know that things went a lot deeper than that. He was calling them into a spiritual life. And it was something that they really wouldn't get until years and years later. And lot of that had to do with the things that they did experience, the things that they did survive and go through. He knew that their faith would build as they went along—the hope and the faith. And we have the same thing. We have the same issue. He was trying to teach them that [their hope and faith] shouldn't rest in miracles. And we're in the same boat, so to speak. We need to realize that God has called us into a process and there is an end to that, which we will see in a little bit.

But, boy, don't we want those things? Don't we want the instant healing? Don't we want the gratification? Don't we want the comfort? We don't like it whenever we become uncomfortable. Like Les was talking, the culture we live in is an instant gratification culture/society that we live in. We want to be *fixed* right away. We want God to repair our trial and all those things that happen to us.

We have the entire chapter in Hebrews 11. We won't turn there, but the whole thing is based on faith in God. All those individuals that died believing and hoping in God,

believing [but] they did not receive the promise as it says there clearly in those Scriptures. And they experienced many miracles.

Let's continue here in John 6.

John 6:22. *On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone—*

23) however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks [after that miracle]—

24) when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25) And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" (NKJ)

They wanted something.

John 6:26. *Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.*

27) "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (NKJ)

Again in the context here, He is explaining to those following on Him that they focused on the [physical] miracles that He did (the loaves that were miraculously multiplied, the four to five thousand that were fed), but He was trying to point to them to something that was far more lasting, something where they would never be hungry again, which He goes on to say in verse 54. Jumping down to verse 54:

John 6:54. *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (NKJ)*

That really rattled their traditional belief systems. They thought they could keep the Law; they could do all these physical things; still have the miracles, still have everything that they wanted. But He was telling them something different here.

Jumping down to verse 60:

John 6:60. *Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"*

61) When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?"

62) "What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"

63) "It is the Spirit [that] gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

64) *"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. (NKJ)*

More than Judas there.

John 6:65. *And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." (NKJ)*

That's why we are here today.

John 6:66. *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*

67) *Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"*

68) *But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

69) *"Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

70) *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"*

71) *He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve. (NKJ)*

It's interesting there in verse 68 where Peter stated his question, "Where do we go? You have the words of life." You can almost see the anguish and the emotion there.

It must have seemed to them at that point, again, many times the disciples as they walked with Christ got very discouraged. If you look at it from strictly a worldly point of view, Christ was not a success, because His success was based on something far greater than the pure physical. Yet, that's the way we would look at it. He was not a successful man.

They [the disciples] were caught up in the turmoil and everything going [on] around them. In a sense, there was a *raging storm*. And they had to survive this.

Let's go to Peter's Epistle because we know that Peter was very emotional. He is the guy that one of the commentators I have called him "the big emotional fisherman" because he's the guy that scolded Christ when Christ said that He was going to suffer, to be killed and to be resurrected. Peter said, "No way is that going to happen to you. That's just not going to happen!" That's when Christ told him, "Get behind me, Satan!" because you're looking at in a purely worldly carnal fashion.

He [Peter] was also with James and John at the transfiguration. One of the first things he wanted to do was to build a shrine to Moses, to Elijah, to Christ—a physical thing! That was his reaction to that. When Christ was walking on the water, he jumped out of the boat, evidently stripped off, jumped out of the boat, and started walking on the water. He was the same guy that whacked off [the servant of] the High Priest's ear. [He

was] very emotional! He denied Christ three times. He is the one that swore at the girl by the fire.

And in Matthew 18, do you remember where he's asking Christ "How many times?" And Christ is giving them the lesson, something they would need for the rest of their lives—something we need all the time. Les mentioned that a little bit—about forgiveness. And Peter is the one who asked Christ, "How many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?" The implication there is "Can I kill him on the eighth time?" [Chuckle.] [Peter] was very emotional. He demonstrated that throughout his early discipleship there.

But let's jump ahead to twenty-five or thirty years later over in 1 Peter 1 because he matured. He learned. And a good part of that was through the things that he suffered because he talks about that here. Over in 1 Peter 1 beginning in verse 1:

1 Peter 1:1. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*

The scattering of the Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, in other words, he's speaking to the Church.

It's interesting to note in the original order of the Epistles after the Book of Acts, there is James whose theme is *Faith, Obedience, and Works*, even in the face of trials and persecutions. Just as a reference James 1, you're familiar with these verses; you don't need to turn there unless you want to, James 1 verses 2 through 4 say:

James 1:2. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (NKJ)*

It has a product.

James 1:4. *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (NKJ)*

It's a process. So chronologically then, that makes sense the way the original order of the New Testament was made because it was James, 1 and 2 Peter which are about *Hope*, which is about being confident in something spiritual other than in the physical; and then it goes into Paul's writings. That's the original order. If you actually look at that, if that were a prologue, it would give encouragement to the rest of Paul's writings.

In fact, 1 Peter has also been called *An Epistle of Hope in the Midst of Suffering*. If you think about the time that it was written 64-64 A.D., Nero burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians. So, he started persecuting [them for] that very severely. In fact, that persecution escalated to the point where Christians were being burned alive or anybody that they even thought [to be] a follower of Christ.

But continuing in verse 2 of 1 Peter 1:

1 Peter 1:2. *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

3) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (NKJ)*

Again, a reference to what it is talking about [here is found] over in 1 Corinthians 15:19 because we know from that account that some were saying "There is no resurrection of the dead." The Sadducees believed [this] and they influenced people with that teaching. But in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 19, [it] says:

1 Corinthians 15:19. *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (NKJ)*

[We are] still in our sin. That is, there is no life. Life is just going to be whatever it is. There is no hope. Verse 20 of 1 Corinthians 15 says:

1 Corinthians 15:20. *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (NKJ)*

In other words, it's going to go way beyond the physical existence that we have.

So, let's continue back here in 1 Peter 1 verse 4.

1 Peter 1:4. *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled [non-physical] and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (NKJ)*

And we have hope in that. Do we not?

Another reference is John 14. Again, you don't need to turn there, but [these are] some of Christ's last words where He said in John 14 and verse 1.... Many times we read this at the Passover.

John 14:1. *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

2) *"In My Father's house are many mansions [or dwelling places]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3) *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (NKJ)*

So, it goes far beyond the things that the disciples suffered, the things that we suffer, the issue that we have, the circumstances that we have in our life. It goes far beyond that. We know that. And I'm putting these things out as reminders for us.

But let's go back to 1 Peter 1 verse 5. Hopefully, you are still there. It goes on to say:

1 Peter 1:5. *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation [speaking to the Church] ready to be revealed in the last time. (NKJ)*

At some point God's Plan is going to reach a fulfillment stage. And we have a part in that.

1 Peter 1:6. *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, (NKJ)*

And we can think of our trials. We can think of those folks then. And it says that they learned patience through that. With Satan's influence and everything today, all the things that happen to us, we have similar issues, similar problems.

But going on in verse 7.... Because it's important:

1 Peter 1:7. *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, (NKJ)*

And we have other Scriptures that tell us and teach us that we're called into a refining process.

1 Peter 1:7b. *...though it is tested by fire, (NKJ)*

And you can think again about being burned alive.

1 Peter 1:7 continued. *...may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,*

8) whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (NKJ)

Remember the disciples didn't see Him. They didn't trust Him at first. They didn't have any confidence in Him. All they saw was how high the waves were, how few fish there were, how little bread there was. That's all they saw. But we have these accounts so that we can learn from [them] and add their experiences to our experiences. And that should be helpful to us.

Going on in verse 9:

1 Peter 1:9. *receiving the end of your faith— (NKJ)*

There will be an end to what we're going through now.

1 Peter 1:9b. *....the salvation of your souls.*

10) Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied

of the grace that would come to you,

11) searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ [which] was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

12) To them it was revealed that, not to themselves [not just for them], but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven— things which angels desire to look into.

13) Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (NKJ)

Here we have that figure of speech, *gird up the loins*. Paul used that term too. It's just an expression. What it is referring to is the robes that were worn at that time. Whenever they wanted to move, they would cinch that up. They would gird that up. Maybe that's where we get the term *girdle* today. I guess if we all wore robes, the guys would be wearing girdles. That's just silliness!

But the point being in that expression and the point that is being made here is that whenever they wanted to move unimpeded, they would cinch up that robe. And the point for us, then, is that, spiritually, if we want to be unimpeded, because it goes on and says here:

1 Peter 1:13. ...*gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace...* (NKJ)

The undeserved pardon and all that God grants to us to be composed in your mind, in other words, that spiritual knowledge is going to give you that approach that you have. You are going to, in that sense, gird up your mind.

Verse 14:

1 Peter 1:14. *as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance [prior to our conversion];*

15) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

16) because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (NKJ)

I don't know if you have ever noticed before but that is a reference to Leviticus 11. That's where it's talking about even what you eat. We have the knowledge; we have the truth like Les was talking about of the Holy Days, of the Sabbath, of clean and unclean foods. And God says, "Be holy." He's telling us here, Peter is inspired to tell us by God that we need to be holy as God is holy in all of our conduct, in everything that we do and that is through the trials and the things that we are faced with. We can't just let down and call it quits whenever we're faced with those things.

Verse 17:

1 Peter 1:17. *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here [That is, your life.] in fear; (NKJ)*

Just a reference, back to Luke 12 where Christ is addressing the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees and He tells them:

Luke 12:4. *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. (NKJ)*

He's talking about the Second Death here.

And just thinking of the things that we face in our lives, I remember a sermon I heard where it talked about the Place of Safety for many of God's people is going to be the grave. It's referring to Isaiah 7 where "The righteous are taken away and no one lays it to heart."

Let's go on here in 1 Peter 1 down in verse 18.

1 Peter 1:18. *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, (NKJ)*

That's what most of us ran on—the tradition that we knew. If we had previous religious experience (Which I didn't—you can tell.), we ran on the tradition of that. In other words, we didn't have that truth that Les was talking about, but now that we have it our conduct is different. And the point I'm trying to make here is: Even in trials, even in suffering, even in things that we go through, we still need to maintain that. It gives us an entirely different perspective.

Verse 19:

1 Peter 1:19. *but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

20) *He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*

21) *who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

22) *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,*

23) *having been born again [or begotten], (NKJ)*

(We've been through that about a million times.)

1 Peter 1:23b. *...not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, (NKJ)*

It doesn't change. It doesn't change from that Psalm we read. It didn't change for David. It didn't change for the disciples. It hasn't changed for us.

1 Peter 1:24. *because... (NKJ)*

And this is what it all comes down to.

1 Peter 1:24b. *"All flesh is as grass, (NKJ)*

He's quoting Isaiah 40 verse 6, grass being a metaphor for a temporal existence, for our life.

1 Peter 1:24 continued. *...and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. (NKJ)*

It just blooms for a while and then it's gone. The Roecks see that all the time. They're living by that.

Verse 25:

1 Peter 1:25. *But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (NKJ)*

Again, we need to remember and we need to think about these things because [these] tend to balance out and mitigate the circumstances we find ourselves in many times, many places in our lives. Just like Peter learned, we learn as we go through life, if we don't quit living God's way. And again, it changes our whole perspective as it should.

I'd like to go through the whole epistle here, but we can't do that. Let's go down to 1 Peter 2 where it says:

1 Peter 2:1. *Therefore [because of all of the things just mentioned], laying aside all malice, all [deceit], hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, (NKJ)*

All that carnality that we had—hopefully, we don't have any more or have much of.

1 Peter 2:2. *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, (NKJ)*

It is a growth process. It's a growth to purity. And actually, until we are called into God's truth, that's a purity you can't find anywhere else. It doesn't exist anywhere else.

Verse 3:

1 Peter 2:3. *if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (NKJ)*

Tasted just means that you have experienced the graciousness of God the Father and Jesus Christ. We experience that every day of our lives—hopefully.

1 Peter 2:4. *Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,
5) you also, as living stones, (NKJ)*

That's just a metaphor for building blocks. Because God does have a plan; we have a part in that and we are the building blocks that God is raising up. A lot of that is through that refining process of the things that we go through.

1 Peter 2:5b. *...are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (NKJ)*

Romans 12:1—we present ourselves daily as a living sacrifice. And that's **in** issues, problems and trials as well as the good times because we're going to have both of them. We would like to have the good times all of the time, but we don't.

Going on down in verse 11 of 1 Peter 2:

1 Peter 2:11. *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims [recognizing a temporal state], abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (NKJ)*

So, we not only have those storms from the outside, we have them from the inside in our very nature that we have to resist and overcome all the time.

1 Peter 2:12. *having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers [They call you that.], they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. (NKJ)*

We might not see that directly, but indirectly we know that just about everything Christian today, just about everything that we believe and have our lives revolve around is being spoken of as evil today. We just got a huge endorsement for marriage. Didn't we? That's a godly institution.

Someone mentioned one time we are kind of living under *The Tyranny of the Offended*. If we offend someone, we may get in a lot of trouble. It depends. Canada is going through that right now.

But "the day of visitation" talked about is the Day of the Lord. And that is something we should look forward to because there is going to be a return to morality. There is going to be a return to God's way of life.

But let's go on here in 1 Peter 2 verse 15. In the context here in 1 Peter is being submissive to authorities wherever and in whatever culture we find ourselves in. And we know, as Les mentioned, this certainly isn't a godly culture that we live in. Verse 15:

1 Peter 2:15. *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— (NKJ)*

And, again, we may not see that in our lifetime, but at some point it will be recognized.

1 Peter 2:16. *as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. (NKJ)*

"Doing good" here is talking about living as Christ lived. Verse 18:

1 Peter 2:18. *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh (NKJ).*

We can extrapolate that to where we can talk about our culture as being akin to slavery. It's because we can't express ourselves. As it says here, we need to be submissive to our masters, the good ones and the bad ones. The way that we could extrapolate that is we can't have a situational attitude where if we have a problem, we're going to act a certain way, an unchristian way. We can't do that. That's what He's telling us here. Sometimes you want to hit back but you can't do that.

Verse 19:

1 Peter 2:19. *For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. (NKJ)*

You don't hit back or respond in a kind-for-kind thing because you consider "Would Jesus Christ do that?" whatever the situation was. And we can't do that.

1 Peter 2:20. *For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? (NKJ)*

And sometimes we deserve what we get, especially if we've done something wrong. If you want to cheat on your income tax, you'll probably have to deal with the IRS. That's going to become a trial for you, but it's something that you deserve.

1 Peter 2:20b. *But when you do good [That is, as Christ would.] and suffer, (NKJ)*

And sometimes you will. For example: The Sabbath, the Holy Days. We've all had job issues with those things.

1 Peter 2:20 continued. *...if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*

21) *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

22) *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth";*

23) *who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; (NKJ)*

And we know that He was viciously accused and crucified.

1 Peter 2:24. *who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, (NKJ)*

At baptism, we said we would.

1 Peter 2:24b. *...might live for righteousness-- by whose stripes you were healed. 25) For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned... (NKJ)*

That means *returned to, repented.*

1 Peter 2:25b. *...to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (NKJ)*

That's one of Christ's titles in the Old Testament. Actually, Messiah means Shepherd.

Peter goes on and gives some more admonishments in the rest of his Epistle, but again we need to jump ahead to chapter 4. In all of this, remember Peter learned from all those emotions, all those things that he suffered. And all the apostles met an untimely death, you could say.

How many apostles were there? Does anybody remember? Actually, there were fourteen (14). And we have all the writers of the New Testament. They all met an untimely death except John, Luke, who was not an apostle. In fact, everything he wrote was from eyewitnesses. He was probably a convert of Paul.

Let's go to 1 Peter 4 beginning in verse 12 where it says:

1 Peter 4:12. *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;
13) but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
14) If you are reproached for the name of Christ, (NKJ)*

And many of us have been in one form or another.

1 Peter 4:14b. *...blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.
15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.
16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.
17) For the time has come for judgment... (NKJ)*

This ought to be a well-worn Scripture for all of us.

1 Peter 4:17b. ...to begin at the house of God; (NKJ)

In other words, our lives convey a message. Not only to those we live amongst, but to God. We're sending a message to God by our conduct, by the way that we live.

Continuing in verse 17:

1 Peter 4:17 continued. ...and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

18) Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (NKJ)

He's loosely quoting Proverbs 11:31 there. Verse 19:

1 Peter 4:19. Therefore [because of everything preceding in the context,] let those who suffer [those who endure to suffer] according to the will of God commit... (NKJ)

And this word *commit* there is interesting because it is a banking term. It just means that you deposit something and it is safe. It is secure. But:

1 Peter 4:19b. ...commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (NKJ)

God doesn't change. He is always faithful, as we should be no matter what we are up against. We should be faithful to what God has called us to.

Let's finish up in Romans 8. The whole context here in Romans 8, remember, is not living according to the physical. It's about not being overwhelmed by circumstances that befall us. And we may not understand what is happening to us at the time.

C. S. Lewis (I don't know if you've ever read any of his writings.), he said that if his house collapses with one blow—by *his house* he was referring to his faith—"If it collapses with one blow, then my house was a house of cards to begin with." And we certainly don't want our house to be as house of cards.

But it goes on. Paul is bringing out a point here in Romans 8 verse 12.

Romans 8:12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (NKJ)

Usually if we're suffering a trial or going through pain or something like that, that's what we concentrate on. That's what we tend to focus on is the flesh. But it goes on here in verse 13:

Romans 8:13. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; (NKJ)

There is a bit of irony here because we're going to die anyway. Right?

Romans 8:13b. ...but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15) For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16) The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17) and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

18) For I consider... (NKJ)

And, again, I'm just reminding everyone of this.

Romans 8:18. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19) For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (NKJ)

It doesn't even know it yet!

Romans 8:20. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; (NKJ)

In other words, that hope is a spiritual thing that the world doesn't even have yet.

Romans 8:21. because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22) For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

23) Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

24) For we were saved in this hope [being saved in this hope], but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? (NKJ)

Someday we will see what we hope for. And we won't need the hope anymore because it will be a reality. Verse 25:

Romans 8:25. But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (NKJ)

We do learn from the things that we go through. Remember some of the things that we read? The trials and things that we go through produce patience in us. They produce perseverance because we don't quit with those things.

Verse 26:

Romans 8:26. Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. (NKJ)

And, boy! Don't we have plenty of those?

Romans 8:26b. *For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit [itself] makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (NKJ)*

We just don't understand sometimes. And sometimes we don't even know how to pray for our own trials, for our own circumstances. And that's when we turn to God and we'll come out the other side.

Verse 27:

Romans 8:27. *Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.
28) And we know that all things work together for good... (NKJ)*

We've read this one about a million times!

Romans 8:28b. *...to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (NKJ)*

And what this means is everything points to the outcome of everything that happens to us. And it goes on here in verse 29:

Romans 8:29. *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (NKJ)*

Let's jump down to verse 31.

Romans 8:31. *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
32) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (NKJ)*

We're going to experience a lot of different things.

Romans 8:33. *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (NKJ)*

Again, God chooses the way that we live. We think a lot of times that... We used to say, "God willing this, God willing that." We found out differently because the point being that God's will is very often, and most often, not what we will at all. Our will is just like the people that sought out Christ that wanted a miracle. They wanted free food. They wanted all of that.

Verse 34:

Romans 8:34. *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (NKJ)*

[Is there] anybody not glad of that?

Romans 8:35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (NKJ)*

That pretty well covers the gamut. And we could interpolate a lot of things in between that—little things, big things that happen to us all the time—but it covers everything. Paul experienced that. We have the account of the things that he suffered and a good bit of that which is what he is relating there. He's speaking from the voice of experience.

Verse 36:

Romans 8:36. *As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (NKJ)*

[He's] quoting Psalm 44, which is an interesting Psalm. We don't have time to go through.

Verse 37:

Romans 8:37. *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

38) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39) nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, (NKJ)

There is nothing big enough!

Romans 8:39b. *...shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJ)*

Nobody can improve on those words. And those words, all these words and these lessons that we have ought to give us hope and encouragement as we progress along this path that God has called us to, as we endure our trial, as we endure and face the storms, as we face the trials, the tribulations, things that we go through in our lives. And, as we do all that, one thing we always need to remember and never ever forget—and these words can reinforce that—is that:

We're looking forward, not to now, but to the future.