

HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY THIRTEEN

Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

Tests are never wasted. God never says, “Oops, I made a mistake. I shouldn’t have given you that one.” It’s not like that. He specifically arranges our trials with our weaknesses and immaturity in mind. He bears down and doesn’t let up. And we groan, and we hurt, and we weep, and we pray, and we grow, and we learn.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FOR millennia, one of the most valuable natural resources has been *gold*. Though not as practical as resources like lumber or oil, gold has captured the eyes and hearts of many due to its brilliance, elegance, and beauty. Yet, the journey that a piece of gold takes to become a shiny ring is not an easy one.

The gold that miners extract from the earth is rarely pure. It is dirty, jagged, and often alloyed with other metals. To separate the pure gold from its contaminants, the metal must undergo an intense refining process.

The refiner begins by placing the metal into a crucible and heating it to nearly 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. At this point, the gold melts, and the impurities slowly rise to the top of the glowing molten mixture. With sweaty brow and steady hands, the refiner gently stirs the mixture and carefully skims all the impurities off the top until only liquid gold remains.

Finally, the refiner pours the molten gold into a mold. Once the liquid cools and the metal solidifies, the process is complete. And that newly minted gold ring is ready to shine brightly for all the world to see.



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For Christians, the journey of spiritual growth is remarkably similar to the journey of that gold ring. The Master Refiner uses fiery trials to purify our character and cleanse our hearts. The process is often painful, but the results are undeniably beautiful.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God’s Word and prayer are essential in our growth—no matter the process God may choose. Say this prayer as you prepare to engage with Scripture today:

Father, I want to live a life that glimmers with Your goodness and glorifies Your greatness. Use my time in Your Word to show me how You can use my trials to “create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10). In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The apostle Peter knew that suffering is an unavoidable reality. But he argued that “it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong” (1 Peter 3:17). Righteous suffering is a central theme throughout Peter’s first letter, and he reiterates the same idea in 4:12–19, while adding a new spin.

Peter sees a trial, not merely as a struggle to endure, but as a challenge to enjoy. Why? Because it cultivates unspeakable joy deep within the heart of a believer. The kind of joy grounded not in our wavering circumstances, but in our unchangeable God.



Observation: React, Remember, Rely

Take several minutes to read 1 Peter 4:12–19. Then read it again. Reread it as much as your schedule allows! The better you know what the passage says, the better you will be able to understand its meaning and apply its truth.



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How to React—1 Peter 4:12–13

Peter opens this section of the letter with two commands. One negative, saying what *not* to do. One positive, saying what to do *instead*. What did the apostle say *not* to do in *1 Peter 4:12*?

According to *4:13*, what should believers in Jesus Christ do *instead*? Why can they act this way?

What to Remember—1 Peter 4:14–18

According to *1 Peter 4:14*, what is true of those who are insulted because of their faith in Christ? Why is this the case?



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What two causes for suffering did Peter contrast in *1 Peter 4:15–16*?

According to *4:17–18*, what truths did Peter affirm about the reality of God’s judgment?

On Whom to Rely—1 Peter 4:19

What central goal of Christian suffering did Peter describe in *1 Peter 4:19*? According to this same verse, how can a believer practically achieve this goal?

Are you going through a fiery trial today? This is an opportunity to draw upon maximum power from God. Maybe the suffering you’re going through is deserved, but most suffering should in no way cause you to feel ashamed. In fact, your suffering may be timely and needed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Truths about Trials

A central goal of interpretation is to use your observations of a passage of Scripture to develop timeless theological truths that always remain valuable for any follower of Jesus.¹ This passage is full of truth that God wants to use to refine you.

Odds are, you aren't a murderer, a serial thief, or a convicted criminal. (And even if you are, God's grace is abundant enough to forgive *any* sin.) However, Peter elevated one particular sin—one that is *very* easy to commit—to the same level as these more intense sins.

The term translated “prying into other people's affairs” used in *1 Peter 4:15* describes a pot-stirrer, a busybody, or a meddler—someone who tries to oversee or manage the affairs and lives of others. What might cause someone to be tempted to act this way when facing trials? Why is this kind of behavior problematic for followers of Jesus?

What did Peter mean in *4:17* when he said, “For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household”? Write a timeless principle on Christian suffering and God's judgment. For some help, read pages 151–152 of Pastor Chuck's Swindoll's commentary *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*. Or look at *Constable's Notes*, a free online commentary available at netbible.org.



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In what ways does this passage reveal that God uses fiery trials to refine and sanctify believers?

No matter the source, no matter the intensity, there’s something about suffering that draws us back to the basics. Invariably, especially during the most intense trials, I go back to what I really believe. I go back to prayer and dependence and getting quiet and waiting on God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Wisdom on Trial

Peter is not the only biblical author who addressed the relationship of suffering and sanctification. Jesus’ half-brother James discussed this theme, approaching the topic with a focus on God-given wisdom.

According to *James 1:2–4*, how should Christians respond *when*—not *if*—they “encounter various trials” (NASB)? Why should they respond in this manner?



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That’s easier said than done, James! James likely expected this response from his readers, and he offered his reply in *James 1:5*. What should Christians do when struggling with trials? According to *1:6–8*, in what manner are they to carry out these actions?

How does James’ message in *1:2–8* help round out your understanding of *1 Peter 4:12–19*?

Prayer is one of the many instruments God uses to refine us during our fiery trials, yet He uses another key tool in the polishing process: *remembrance*.



Application: Personal Growth through All the Heat

When you faced your own fiery trials in the past, you may have felt burned by God—as if He had forgotten or even abandoned you. But your hurting is not His harming. God allows you to face the heat to refine you into the complete, beautiful person He designed you to be. Pastor Chuck offers two points of application from *1 Peter 4:12–19* on achieving growth through trials.



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First, when trials come, remember that God is faithful. Rest in Him! In what ways has God shown His faithfulness to you throughout your life? Take some time to reflect on this question. Then thank God for His rock-steady character. How can your memory of God’s faithfulness help you stand strong and withstand the heat of a trial that might come in the future?

Second, when trials stay, remember to do what is right. Hide in Him! When the fiery trials of life burn hottest, what vices do you tend to pursue in an attempt to cool off the flames? What kinds of pure, Christlike virtues should you pursue instead in order to please God (*1 Peter 4:19*)?

What practical steps can you take today to find more joy in your trials?



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Hundreds of years ago, an unknown believer composed a hymn called, “How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord.”² As you conclude your study, reflect on the second and fourth stanzas, sung from the perspective of Jesus speaking to the Christian facing a fiery trial:

“Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
for I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand. . .

“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
my grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
the flames shall not hurt thee; I only design
thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.”

Fiery trials await each one of us on our path. Only by God’s grace will you be able to endure the painful heat. And when you emerge from the flames, though you may bear some burns and scars, you will be refined and “come out as pure as gold” (*Job 23:10*). Take heart in that truth.

Only then will you find joy in your trials.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, give me the strength to withstand the fiery trial I am facing today. Though I am often tempted to turn away from You because of the pain, help me remember Your faithfulness, so I can endure this trial in a Christlike way that is honoring to You. I trust You to use this experience to purify, refine, and sanctify me. In Jesus’ faithful name, Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “How to Study the Bible for Yourself.”
2. K— [pseud.], “How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord,” 1787, hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/how_firm_a_foundation_ye_saints_of.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

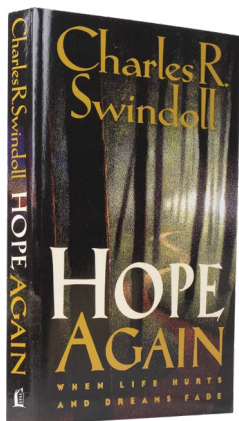
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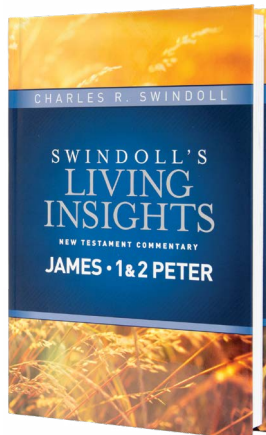
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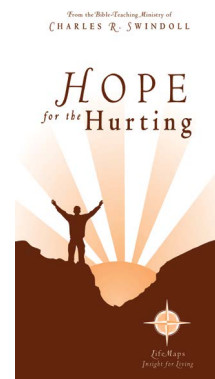
Tools for Digging Deeper



Hope Again: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade
by Charles R. Swindoll
softcover book



Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament
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Hope for the Hurting
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For the 2023 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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