



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Peter 1:6-9

“Conflict, Failure, Trials or The Experiences of the Redeemed” TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now tonight we are picking up our series of studies at “Conflict, Failure, Trials or The Experiences of the Redeemed.” And if you have your New Testaments and I hope you have, turn with me to the first Epistle of Peter, 1 Peter, near the end of the New Testament. I know that most of you know where 2 Peter is. And so it’s just in front of 2 Peter right after James, 1 Peter.

It’s probably not surprising for us to read that the nation’s number one health problem is emotional, mental illness, and not physical illness.

Now the Bible recognizes that there is a relationship between sin and physical health. And I think that if we recognize that which the Bible sets forth for us, we would be much better off in our daily life. Long before modern psychiatry and psychology, the Bible set forth what modern psychiatry and psychology now admit, that there is a relationship between psychosomatic diseases and physical health.

Dr. William Sadler, who is an outstanding psychiatrist, has commented on this in this way. He said, “No one can appreciate so fully as a doctor the amazingly large percentage of human disease and suffering which is directly traceable to worry, fear, conflict, immorality, dissipation and ignorance to unwholesome thinking and unclean living. The sincere acceptance of the principles in teachings of Christ with respect to the

life of mental peace and joy, the life of unselfish thought and clean living, would at once wipe out more than half the difficulties, diseases and sorrows of the human race. In other words, more than one-half of the present afflictions of mankind could be prevented by the tremendous prophylactic power of actually living up to the personal and practical spirit of the real teachings of Jesus Christ. The teachings of Jesus applied to our modern civilization understandingly applied, not merely nominally accepted would so purify, uplift and vitalize us that the race would immediately stand out as a new order of beings, possessing superior mental power and increased moral force. Irrespective of the future rewards of living, laying aside all discussion of future life, it would pay any man or woman to live the Christ life just for the mental and moral rewards it affords here in this present world.” He goes on to say, “Someday our boasted scientific development, as regards mental and moral improvement, may indeed catch up with the teachings of this man of Galilee.”

Professor Carl Jung, who many of you know or know of, has said this concerning his practice of psychiatry. He said, “During the past thirty years people from all civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients among all my patients in the second half of life, that is to say over thirty-five. (Now I know that there are not many of you here that are thirty-five or over. But nevertheless for those of us who are), among all my patients in the second half of life, that is to say over thirty-five there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It seems to me that side-by-side with a decline of religious life, the neuroses grow noticeably more frequent.”

Now I think that any genuine Christian who has read his Bible much at all would know this to be true. But as you look at Christians, particularly, they seem to be engaging in types of activity and doing certain things that would make us really wonder if they do understand these things which the word of God and which many of our modern psychiatrists and psychologists now admit. It's rather disturbing to see the people of God

unhappy and depressed. And instead of accepting the remedies that are set forth in God's word, seeking outside remedies. Why are Christians depressed? Why is it that they do not find in the New Testament life which is set forth here that which really satisfies? Well now the Bible says that ultimately the cause is unbelief. That is, lack of trust in God.

Now that unbelief may express itself in various ways. It may express itself, for example, in the acceptance of false doctrine. And when we do accept false doctrine, we lose the joy of the Christian life. For example, the Galatians who were believers in Jesus Christ found it necessary to receive a letter from the Apostle Paul because while they had been joyous in the acceptance of the Christian life, others had come in since Paul and had misled them so that they were in danger as Paul puts it of “falling from the grace method of salvation.” And Paul writes to them and says, “Where is then the blessedness of which you spoke? for when I was with you and preached the gospel to you, you would have been willing to pluck out your eyes, and to give them to me.” Apparently, an implicit acknowledge of the fact that Paul's thorn in the flesh had to do with his eyesight. But they were happy and joyous because they had received the word of God. But now they had turned aside to heresy. And as a result they had lost the joy of the Lord. And consequently, they were depressed. They no longer were happy and joyous in the Christian life. It was gone because they had believed false doctrine.

And so it is possible that some of us are depressed because we have not listened to the word of God. And we have not come to know its teaching. And we shall never really amount to anything as Christians or even as individuals until we come to understand what the teaching of the word of God is. In other words, it is Bible doctrine in the final analysis that will be the real strength of our lives, for that is God's teaching. And it is the basic structure of human existence. That is, human existence that is happy and joyous and in the will of God. Of course, it is also possible that one reason we are disturbed is because God has subjected us to a little discipline in the Christian life and we

have not been willing to take it. And that’s what we want to talk about tonight: trials, conflict, sufferings; the things that befall Christians.

Now these things befall us frequently because God wishes to discipline us because we have been disobedient. But sometimes they come simply because he wants us to get an education. And frankly, I think in the lives of most of the Christians that I know it is fatherly discipline with a view to education, rather than fatherly discipline because we have sinned against him that is most frequent. But we often are not willing to face up to it. And when the trials of life come, when the sufferings, when the conflicts come, we are unprepared for them because we do not realize that often they come for our good.

Now last time, remember, we had a wonderful lesson. We talked about Peter walking upon the water and how that was an illustration of the Christian life. That is, that we are able to do the impossible when we keep our eyes upon Jesus Christ. For just as Peter, by keeping his physical eyes upon the Lord, was able to walk upon that water physically. There was something in that look of his that drew virtue or strength out of Jesus Christ physically that enabled him to do the impossible. So in the Christian life, the real Christian life set forth in the New Testament, is the supernatural life whereby as we look by faith to Jesus Christ, that look of faith or trust, that’s what it means, that look of trust in him is that which draws strength from Jesus Christ out of him into our lives whereby we are able to do the supernatural. And consequently, the genuine Christian who trusts in Jesus Christ day by day is able to live a life that is just as supernatural as walking upon the water because it is not our natural life to live that way. And only by the help of God can we. So when you see a happy, joyous Christian you’re looking at a miracle because most of us, left to ourselves, would not be very happy. We would certainly not be victorious. We would, generally speaking, be overcome by the trials and difficulties and struggles of life. And most of us would be in a terrible mess most of the time were it not for the fact that there is this life that God offers to us.

Now when we have difficulty what do we do? We must remember that when we are born again we become members of God’s family. In fact, the Bible is very strong in its emphasis here. When you believe in Jesus Christ and put your trust in him, remember the beginning of life is the cross, we’ve talked about this, Jesus Christ there bore our sins vicariously as our substitute and because he bore our sins vicariously as our substitute, God offers eternal life to those who put their trust in him who died for us. And the moment that we put our trust in him, the moment that we say in our hearts, “Thank you Lord for dying for me. I do accept this life that you offer,” that moment the word of God says that we are born again. We’re given a new life. We have a new nature, a divine nature.

Now this new nature that we have, of course, is an additional nature. We still have the old nature. As a matter of fact, the old nature often seems to come alive the moment the new nature comes to dwell in the same person. But we have two natures.

Now a man becomes a Christian by this simple trust in the Lord Jesus. Sometimes we forget that this act of faith which we exercise when we believe in Jesus Christ is the same expression of our being that should characterize our life day by day thereafter. In other words, just as we trusted what Christ did on the cross at Calvary for us two thousand years ago. Now that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the throne of God, the Christian life is the trust in him who sits by the side of God. And so as we believe in him who died for us, we receive the benefits of that work by faith. God says it. And we accept it by faith. So when we put our trust in the living, risen Lord who is at the right hand of the throne of God, the benefits that he offers us now day by day – he offers to take care of us, he offers to provide our needs, he offers to lead and guide us, he offers to protect us – the moment that we trust in him then that, just as Peter’s look drew strength from Christ, so that look of faith draws strength from him for the daily life. But now what about these trials that come to us?

Now let me make two or three points which I think ought to be made right at the beginning when we talk about suffering and trial in the Christian life. Suffering is very real.

Now I must confess, and I'm not saying this in order to be nasty or mean, but I am not very impressed by any type of doctrine that minimizes suffering. Suffering is very real. Tragedies abound on every hand. And they are real tragedies. Trials face every one of us, and severe trials. And suffering is a very real thing.

But now I want to say something beyond that. Suffering is a very reasonable thing too. As a matter of fact, it is suffering that witnesses to our sin, it witnesses to our need, and it witnesses to the love of God. Someone has said, “God whispers to us in pleasures. He speaks in our consciences. He shouts in our pains.” Let me illustrate it. When life is going very well and we're on top of the world, business is going fine, raises are coming regularly, or those deals that you have been engaged in have all turned out successfully, you're having amazing success in your contacts and you're just selling your product hand over fist and you have a hard time even keeping up with the money that's coming in, very often your thoughts really do not go towards God at all. In fact, you forget all about spiritual things. You forget all about eternal things. You're really having a wonderful time. And you're enjoying life. And you come home one day and you sit down and you open up the newspaper and everything is wonderful. And all of a sudden there is a sharp stab of pain in the abdomen and you think immediately, “I have cancer.” And suddenly, you begin to think about eternal things. God begins to cross your mind. You begin to think about your relationship to the eternal.

Now to me it seems that that little bit of suffering is a very, very salutary thing. For it has made you think for the first time perhaps in a longtime about spiritual things. And so what do you do? You get on the phone and you make an appointment with your doctor. That is, or your wife gets on the phone and makes it for you, forces you to go. And so you go see the doctor and after a few days and a few tests are made and you

discover that you're alright. And so you forget all about those thoughts that you had about eternal things and you're back in the old rut again. And it's not long, of course, if you belong to God that soon he's going to bring another sharp stab of pain or something else in order to wake you up.

You see, suffering is really a very reasonable thing. And it's a witness to us. And it comes to us from God. Augustine used to say that “God has many things to give us, but he cannot give them to us because our hands are so full.” And suffering is God's way of getting our attention. And it's a very good way of doing it too.

I think that as you think about suffering there're several different kinds of suffering. And we're inclined to react rather negatively to most of our suffering, but I read something not so long ago that impressed me quite a bit. And in it C.S. Lewis was talking about suffering, and he said, “As a matter of fact, there are four different types of suffering.” He said, “There is first of all the suffering that an artist might feel for a painting.”

Now my wife is a painter. That is, she dabbles in painting. And I think that I can understand what Mr. Lewis is talking about when he writes about the four types of love and suffering and the relationship to them. I can imagine the love that an artist has for a painting because I see my wife's love for hers. And it seems to me that as you watch an artist paint and you'll notice that they paint and then occasionally they're not satisfied and they take out their knife and they scratch off something like this and then they repaint and then they scratch off and repaint until finally the painting is finished.

Now that is an illustration of one type of love, the love that an artist has for the painting. But now you know if you were the canvas you might not really think that that was love. Particularly, when the artist takes a knife out and begins to scratch a little you would just probably say if you were a painting, “I wish I were nothing more than just a thumbnail sketch,” or something like that. “I wish I wasn't such a grand painting because perhaps you wouldn't take such care with me and I wouldn't get all this scratching.”

[Laughter] Then Mr. Lewis, after he talks about love on that level, he goes on to talk about the love that a man has for a beast, a dog.

Now dogs have a smell. And they also have other habits which frustrate the love that men have for them. And so in order to get rid of these things – if you own a dog, well one of the things you do is to bathe your dog. And then, of course, before that you must house train it in order that you might really feel free to express your love towards it. But I believe if you went to the puppy while the puppy was being trained or while the puppy was taking a bath and you were to ask the puppy if master really loved it, and if the puppy could reply he probably would say, “I don’t really know whether master does love me or not.” And if he were a theologian, he might have some serious questions about the goodness of his master. But let’s move on from the love of a master for a dog to the love of father for a son.

Now if you’ve had a son, you understand what this is. And if you do love your son, you are not going to talk like this are you, “I’m only interested in one thing. I’m only interested in my son having a wonderful time. I’m interested in giving him everything I possibly can so that he can just have one long life of pleasure. I don’t really care what kind of an individual he is, just so he has a good time.” Is that really the way you feel towards your son? No, it isn’t. As a matter of fact, because he is your son you want to do everything for him to prepare him for life. And so it’s very necessary that you discipline him, that you teach him, that you train him, that you instruct him. And there are many times when son is not very, very happy with Daddy. Can you remember? I can remember. I remember those resolutions I used to make when my father would take me out and take out the razor strap. You can see how old I am now. But I can remember the razor strap. And I can remember those resolutions that I used to make. One thing I used to say more than once, “When I grow up and when I have some children, I’m not going to whip them with a razor strap. I’m not going to treat my children like that.” In fact, I expressed it several times. And so when the time came and I had a son, I didn’t do

it. I beat him with a hairbrush. [Laughter] And I'm glad I did. [Laughter] And I notice now with my two twin grandchildren, my girls, they're about not quite three years of age, that they are already getting a little discipline too. And what's been handed down from grandfather to father and so on is carried on to the good of those who are involved. Let's take the fourth class of love, the love that a man has for a woman.

Now you know when you fall in love with a woman, men, you don't cease becoming interested in her. As a matter of fact, that's when you really become interested. Until you fall in love with her and until she falls in love with you, well there're some things that you really cannot bring up in her presence.

Now, my wife, when I fell in love with her and she fell in love with me, she was thirteen and I was fifteen. We were very experienced. [Laughter] But when we fell in love with one another and began to realize that we did love one another, there were certain things we were able to talk about that we'd never been able to talk about before. In fact, there were one or two things I really didn't like about her. And when the time came that I really felt sure of myself with her, I said something about them. And she said something about a lot of things with me. [Laughter] Because, you see, it is love really that is responsible for much suffering trial.

Now you want a loving father don't you? Wouldn't you really like to have a loving God? Well, that's what you've got. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, that's precisely what you have. You have a loving God. Not a namby-pamby that sweeps in who doesn't care anything about you. Not a person who is not disturbed by things that are dishonoring to him and not for your good. But one who has your best interests at heart and the deepest interests of your being at heart. And consequently, because he loves you so much he doesn't hesitate to do that which is absolutely essential for you to become that which he wishes you to become because it's for your good.

Now sufferings and trial and discipline in the Christian life come because he loves us. Not because he does not love us. Just like a father who loves. And I want to tell you

some of the things we have to bear are very, very hard to bear, but I'm glad I've got that kind of father. Because I know that ultimately this shall be for my good.

Now that's a very long introduction to two or three verses in 1 Peter. But I want to turn now to these verses and I want you to see that the thing that Peter says in these four verses that I'm going to read, 1 Peter 1:6, 7, 8 and 9. The things he has to say here are just the things that I've been talking about.

Now let's begin reading – well, just for the fun of it, let's begin reading with verse 1. And really it is fun. I want you to notice as we read what we really have as Christians.

Now, mind you, I'm not talking about every one of you because I don't know every one of you in the room. Perhaps every one is a Christian already. I hope so. But if you are not a Christian, remember the way to become a Christian is to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ who died for you. It's just as simple as that. If you, in your heart, say, “Thank you Lord for dying for me,” that moment you become a genuine Christian because God gives you new life. Your sins are forgiven. Your past is wiped out before God. Your future is secure.

Now Peter is addressing Christians. He's addressing those who have already believed in Christ. That's evident from verse 8, which we will read in just a moment. But notice as he writes,

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us (That is, hath brought us to birth), hath begotten us again (That's the new birth. That is what it is to be born again. Born once physically, born again spiritually when we believe in Jesus Christ), hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Now many people think that if the Christian life were just this everything would be wonderful. Because, you see, we have new life. We have an inheritance in heaven. We have a hope. In the meantime, “we are kept,” as Peter says. What more do we need? Well, there is one thing that we really do need. And that’s discipline. And we need education. And so Peter goes on to write about it. He says,

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice (That is in these wonderful blessings that you have), though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

Now Peter’s first epistle was written to strengthen the brethren. Jesus had told Peter when Peter was tested while our Lord was here in the days of his flesh that when he was converted that he was to strengthen his brethren. And 1 Peter and 2 Peter are epistles written in which he strengthens the believers in the places that he mentions in the 1st verse. In addition, remember the Lord Jesus had told Peter before he left that Peter was to feed his sheep. And in 1 Peter, Peter feeds his sheep. And he has fed the sheep of our Lord down through the years ever since.

Now the 6th verse, which is the first verse we want to look at, expresses the paradox of persecution. This epistle was written to strengthen those who were suffering.

About twenty times the word suffering occurs in 1 Peter. And so the believers are suffering. And the epistle is written to give food for the fainting flock of God. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

Now I didn't want to give you the impression last week when we had that wonderful passage in Matthew chapter 14 that the Christian life was one big happy life. It is really not that. In fact, I always feel that when I hear a Christian say that “I believed in Jesus Christ. And ever since I believed in Jesus Christ it's been nothing but just happiness everyday.” I wonder really how deep they have entered into the Christian life because the Christian life is a way home to God through the valley of the shadow, as well as over the delectable mountains. There are wonderful experiences in the Christian life. And they may even come daily. But ultimately, we're going to have to feel the disciplines of life as well. And these disciplines, I say, are not because of our sins, it's to deepen us, to educate us, to let us know what God can really do for us. If everything's going wonderful, we don't really need him too much. But it's when things go bad that we discover what God can really do for us.

So Peter speaks about their delight in their salvation, but at the same time they are dejected by persecution. They have been put to grief. They “are in heaviness,” as he says. And it's “through manifold temptations,” manifold testings. And you'll notice too, he says, “if need be.”

Now, of course, most of the time the need exists; discipline is necessary in order to perfect us. I have a good friend who led me to the Lord and he was the pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse. And Dr. Barnhouse lived out in the country in Doylestown near Philadelphia. And he lived out on a farm. He spent very little time there actually and he had someone else do the farming for him. He traveled all over the world. I think he went to Europe about thirty-five times and was around the world many times. But he did have a farm. And he had someone

who was farming it for him. And he said that once a friend of his who raised strawberry plants nearby came to him one day and said, “Dr. Barnhouse, last year we came to the place where we had some extra plants and I was just wondering if you might desire some.” Dr. Barnhouse said, “I’d love them. I love strawberries.”

So the day came and one thousand strawberry plants were sent over by his friend. He spoke to his handyman who farmed the land for him on shares and he said, “Now, put out the strawberry plants.” And this man was an accomplished farmer. And so he put out the thousand plants. Dr. Barnhouse said it was long about in June that he went out and he looked and the strawberry plants were blooming and his mouth began to water at the anticipation of those strawberries. And he said the very next day he came home at noon and his man was there and he said, “What have you been doing today?” He said, “Why, I’ve been picking the blooms off of the strawberry plants.” Dr. Barnhouse said, “I looked at him. I could not believe my ears, picking the blooms off the strawberry plants. What in the world are you doing man?” And he went on to explain to Dr. Barnhouse. He said, “Dr. Barnhouse, if you allow strawberry plants to bloom the first year and have strawberries, most of the strength of that plant goes into those blooms the first year. And those plants will never be really strong plants. But if the first year you go out and snip off all of the blooms, the growth goes into the plant itself. And consequently, you’ll have several times as many strawberries in the future and much better ones too.” And Dr. Barnhouse said, “That’s what I’ve been enjoying ever since.” He said, “You know, I spoke to a friend of mine and asked him how old his daughter was.” And he said, “She’s fourteen going on eighteen.” [Laughter] And he said, “I thought of my strawberries.” [Laughter] You see, she wanted the berries. But she wasn’t willing to wait.

As you know, the Christian life is very much like that. And God often sends these little things into our lives in order that we might know what he can do for us, in order

that our lives might be strengthened and deepened, that we might really come to know God a little better.

And so Peter addresses these Christians who are rejoicing in their blessings, but at the same time “they are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” And now he says in the 7th verse that “the purpose of this persecution is the glory and praise and honor at the second coming of Jesus Christ.” Look at that 7th verse. He says that “you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

In other words, the sufferings of life have a gracious end and goal in view, “Praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” And when he says “the trial of your faith,” the Greek by the way there has “the proven part of your faith.” There’re some things in our lives that are chaff. And it is by means of the experiences of discipline that the chaff becomes evident as chaff. And that which is the real vital gold of our faith is that which remains through the trial. We have a saying, “All that glitters is not gold.” And that is true in the Christian life. All that glitters is not the gold of spiritual life. And it is by means of the experiences of life that we really discover how much of the truth of God that we have in our life. If you want to purify gold, you pass it through fire. And if you want to purify a Christian and discover what is really of God and to single that out and strengthen it and make it evident, then you pass the Christian through fire. And that’s what God does.

Now he goes on to say that “we shall have praise and honour and glory at the second coming of Jesus Christ.” In the Old Testament, as you read the Old Testament, you notice that the lives of the Old Testament saints are quite different from the lives of the New Testament saints in many cases. In fact, in the Old Testament it almost seems as if the evidence of the blessing of God is prosperity. But in the New Testament the evidence of the blessing of God is adversity. In fact, many Christians have commented

upon that very fact. But you see it's because God loves us that he passes us through this discipline.

And now finally in the 8th and 9th verses he says, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” “Having not seen.” The Christian is dominated by an invisible person.

I have a good friend. He's a preacher. He likes to say in his meetings when he's speaking, “For fifty years I've been in love with a man whom I've never seen.” And then he will say, “I need a picture of my wife, but I don't need a picture of him.” Actually, the Christians are like that aren't they? “Whom having not seen, ye love (Jesus Christ), in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And the ultimate end of your faith, is the salvation of your souls.”

Now as I close tonight I want you just to notice several sources of consolation to us in our fiery trial and they help us to keep the balance of trials with triumph. Notice the 6th verse again, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season.” The suffering that comes to a Christian, the trials that come, the troubles that come, they come for a season. The pain is only for a time. The joy, of course, will go on throughout eternity.

Did you know that it is psychologically true that it is easier to forget pain than it is pleasure? Did you know that? It's true. In fact, I wonder if that doesn't really reflect the divine government in life. Because the experiences of life that we pass through here to discipline us, to educate us for the future, they shall be forgotten. And when we reach the presence of the Lord it will be praise, honor and glory. And we will be prepared for the life of eternity. And the things that we pass through now are just for a season. Remember that. Just for a season. And if you're passing through trial, if you're passing through difficulty, and you are a genuine Christian, it's just for a season. If you take the long look, it's just for a time. Life does pass very quickly, doesn't it? Soon the strawberries are going to come and they'll be better than ever because of the troubles and trials that you faced.

You'll notice too he says in the 6th verse, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice.” The strength of the Christian in the midst of trials is the joy of the knowledge of the blessings of the Christian life. Number one, we have a hope for the future. We know that no matter what happens now, we shall have this hope ultimately. Because we have believed in Jesus Christ, this has secured for us the blessings of salvation, “the blessings of an inheritance that is incorruptible, that is undefiled, that fadeth not away.”

By the way, have you ever noticed how in the Bible all of these blessings are set forth in negative terms like this? Never once are we ever told what heaven is really like. Never once are we told what our inheritance is really like. We're just told it's not like anything down here on the earth. It's incorruptible because things down here are corrupt. It's undefiled because everything down here is defiled. It fades not away because everything down here fades away. And so in the midst of trials the thing that strengthens us is not only the knowledge that it's for a season, but the knowledge of what we have permanently. We have this salvation. We have inheritance. And we have the assurance that at the second coming of Jesus Christ we shall have praise and honor and glory as a result of the disciplines of life. What's the secret then of overcoming trials? Will you look again at the 8th verse? I said the reason that many Christians today are depressed is because, according to the Bible, they don't really trust God.

Now you'll notice here that the secret of victory in the midst of trials is trust. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,” in whom believing. In other words, trials become triumphs through trusting, trusting. That's the secret. Just as we enter into life by trusting the one who died for us, so we continue in the Christian life by trusting the one who is at the right hand of the throne of God for us constantly.

Job, in the 23rd chapter and the 10th verse of his book, makes a very good statement I think. This verse reads, Job chapter 23 and verse 10, “But he knoweth the

way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

In one of George MacDonald’s book there is a woman who has met a sudden sorrow. And she exclaims bitterly, “I wish I had never been made.” And a friend replies, “My dear, you’re not made yet. You’re only being made. And this is the maker’s process.” Have you ever felt like that? I wish I had never been born. Linus speaks about that. Mr. Schulz has Linus saying, “My sister says she wishes I had never been born. Good grief. The theological implications of that statement are positively astounding.” [Laughter] He says something like that. But have you ever felt the same way yourself? I wish I had never been born. I wish I had never been made.

Well, the truth of the matter is if you’re a genuine Christian, if you have put your trust in Jesus Christ, it’s true, you are not made yet. The experiences of life are part of God’s process in making you. And I think one of the most wonderful blessings in heaven is going to be to gather around the throne of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And one giant testimony leading down through the centuries and hear from the lips of other believers through the ages, the things that God did to bring them to that place and to bring them to the place of maturity because every one of us is different and God has to discipline every one of us in a slightly different way. And it’s going to wonderful to hear the stories of how God has accomplished his purposes in the lives of the saints. And I am surely looking forward to that myself.

Now it’s just possible that tonight in this room someone really is experiencing some terrible trials, troubles, suffering. And, of course, I want to express to you my deepest sympathy. If you are not a Christian, it is perhaps God’s way of getting your attention, just like that sharp abdominal pain. It just may be that God is trying to get your attention to remind you of what he has done for you and what he can do for you.

Now if you are a Christian, I want to try to say something to you as I close that at least I think it should be a tremendous strengthening force for you. In the final analysis,

there is only one place which answers the questions that we have when we pass through trials. And that place where we find the answer to them is the place of Calvary. And if for just a moment, you reflect upon the fact that the eternal God gave his son in order that you might be his and if you reflect upon the fact that this is the extreme suffering of the universe. The greatest sufferer is not man. The greatest sufferer is God. And if you reflect upon that fact that this is God’s word to you of how much he cares, then in the midst of the problems of life, I’m sure as you look at the cross you will say, “Lord, Thy Calvary stills all our questions. A God who loves like this can be trusted in the experiences of my life.”

It’s wonderful to be a Christian. And it’s wonderful to have supernatural experiences. And you will have them. But one of the places by which and through which you shall come to know God in the most intimate and deepest way is the place of suffering. And I hope that as you face the Christian life you will not forget that conflicts, trials, sufferings, tragedies. These are things in which God gets our attention and causes our lives to be deepened so that we might know him better. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of knowing Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. And as we look off to Calvary, Lord, we do realize that all of our questions are answered there ultimately. And we know that Calvary is the final answer to the questions of life. And to know that we have a loving God who has suffered and who continues to love, and love so deeply that he disciplines those whom he loves. Lord, this is a great comfort to us. And we pray that we may through the experiences of life...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]