***“Suffer Trials”*** by S. Finlan, at The First Church, April 19, 2020

**1 Peter 1:3–6**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5who are being protected by the power of God . . . 6In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials.

**Acts 2:14, 31–33, 38**

14Peter stood up and proclaimed. . . 31“David foresaw the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’ 32This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. 33Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. . .

38 “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The First Peter passage is all about hope, and Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 is about the *basis* for that hope in Jesus’ power and ministry. I want to start with the basis, specifically the last sentence.

It’s about salvation. He says there are two things that people need to do: repent and be baptized in Jesus’ name. Repentance means a turn-around. It is a repudiation of misbehavior, and a decision to follow God’s will. It’s a new start in life.

Secondly, people are to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. “In the name of Jesus Christ” means in the power and authority of Jesus the Messiah. We are actually baptized under the authority of Jesus. This means we acknowledge him as God’s anointed, and pledge our loyalty to him. Further, we accept membership in Jesus’ family. More personally, it means you accept Jesus as your teacher and your rescuer.

So Peter is calling for people to make a decision to turn around, and to accept Jesus as the one appointed by God, and who has the authority to forgive sins. We turn *away* from sin and *to* the Son.

Nothing else is demanded. There is nothing about the cross or about a penalty, nothing about a payment for sins, nothing about faith *versus* works. In fact, turning around and changing one’s behavior means that works *do* matter. Salvation comes from two things: an honest turnaround and an acceptance of the Messiah. It has to be *honest*. It does no good to pretend, to make an outward act as a way of hedging your bets.

It has to be a serious decision. And Peter says it has two results: your sins are forgiven, and you receive the Holy Spirit. This changes your life in two important ways. You experience relief if you accept that God has forgiven your sins, and you are filled with anticipation if you accept the influence of the Spirit in your life. This is like being born again, because you can let go of the guilt you feel for the past, and you decide to let the Spirit help direct you in the present and future.

So it involves making a *life* turnaround, and then allowing God to help you in your living from this point forward.

Now that I’ve looked at the end of Peter’s sermon, I want to glance at what comes before. He says the Resurrection was foretold in the Psalms. He testifies that he himself is a witness of the Risen Jesus. And he affirms that Jesus has poured out the Spirit upon people. *We* may not always experience the Spirit vividly, but the disciples noticed it *very* intensely when they first received it. And this spirit outpouring is also part of the power and ministry of Jesus.

Peter certainly knew the transforming power of this Spirit in his life. It became the source of all his courage. And so, in his letter, Peter speaks energetically about “a new birth into a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus . . . and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and . . . kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet 1:3–4). This knowledge enables us to “rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials” (1:6).

He says we are “protected by the power of God” through these trials (1:5). I am guessing you are enduring a bit of a trial right now. You may feel lonely, bored, confined, deprived of a normal social life, although you may be learning about new kinds of socializing, too. These trials are not a big problem if you know you have received the Holy Spirit, if you have the “new birth into a living hope,” if you believe you are forgiven and accepted into the family of Jesus.

The message today is all about hope. Hope comes at the beginning, the middle, and the end. Hope is part of what persuaded us to believe in the first place. Hope is affirmed here and now in our experience of the Spirit, and our taste for what is good and true. And hope points to our future life. Hope has both present and future power.

Peter’s hope was also buoyed by his experience of having been visited by the risen Jesus. But we have our own experiential basis. Our hope is fueled by the gratitude we feel, knowing that God loves us as the little children we are. Even a time of trials cannot dampen our certainty that we are loved, and will be provided for. Paul says “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5). Here I’m borrowing from Paul to support Peter. They both experienced this hope—and so have I! So have you, if you have turned toward the Son.