

Testing Your Faith

Introduction. Sometimes when you hear certain expressions, you immediately recognize them as being uttered by those who have traveled a difficult path or navigated a tumultuous ocean. We are going to have hard, diverse experiences in life. They may include suffering for the cause of Christ (2 Timothy 3:12), although our sufferings are but a drop in the bucket compared to some who have underwent persecution (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 17-18). They may run in the vein of sickness, pain, and death.

Job and Christ were master sufferers. Christ suffered as few men have been called upon to suffer (Hebrews 12:1-3). No mortal man went deeper in grief than Job. His children were all dead, his wealth was swept away, his body was ravaged by sickness and disease, and the friends who pretended to comfort him, only accused him of being a hypocrite, and his wife told him to "curse God and die." Job was a man who epitomized 2 Corinthians 5:7. He was brought low, but being a man of faith, and having overcome by faith, he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). This was not the statement of an apathetic believer in God; it is a statement of victorious faith. Every Christian who has ever walked the face of the earth has walked by faith, but that faith will be tried. Often in our prayers we have asked for stronger faith, but the way of stronger faith lies in the rough path of sorrow.

I. ***We Must Have Faith***

- A. The natural man has eyes, hands, ears, and a nose to perceive the world around him. But our faith serves as our senses to understand eternal realities. True trust in God is not something that we turn on and off like a water faucet (Hebrews 10:38; 11:6). There is absolutely no period of our life in which it is safe for us to live by feeling. We live by faith; we walk by faith; and we expect to die looking for the Lord's appearing.
- B. We can have faith in God for several reasons.
 1. The forgiveness of sins.
 - a) We can honestly believe in the forgiveness of our sins.
 - b) Our trust for the forgiveness of our sins lies solely in our acceptance and obedience of the Lamb of God (Acts 3:19-21).
 2. The sanctification of our souls.
 - a) We cannot conquer sin by ourselves. We must have God's help.
 - b) The same Christ who justified and redeemed us, also sanctifies us to turn away from sin (Acts 26:18).
 3. The presentation of God's love and mercy.
 - a) We know that every conduct of God toward His children is motivated by love.

- b) Some of us have probably had some very bitter experiences, and we may all have many more, but we are assured that good can come from it (Romans 8:18).
- C. Our faith is not to play with. Our faith is a shield by which we are to extinguish the flaming missiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:16; 1 Peter 5:9). We do not display our faith by our grand attire. Faith is like a diamond uncut, the brilliance of which has not been seen until it is dissected. The brilliance of our faith is not seen until it is tested. Soldiers are made only in battle. Warriors are educated only when exposed to warfare.

II. ***Our Faith Will Be Tested***

- A. Our testing produces faith which gets better and better (Psalm 26:1-2; 1 Peter 1:6-7). If you want to go to heaven, your faith must be worthy of God and faith that cannot bear a trial is faith that is not worth having. In a world full of sunshine, there would only be deserts. Do you love looking up at the sky at night, seeing the stars and constellations? You cannot see them in the light.
- B. There is a big difference between testing and temptation.
1. The word "trial" is only found in 1 Peter 1:6-7 and James 1:3. When Peter specifies that faith is more precious than gold, he means that the fire selects, purifies, refines, and gives the metal greater value; it proves its authenticity and removes impurities. No goldsmith will deliberately waste precious metal. He will put it into the smelting furnace long enough to remove the cheap impurities; then he would pour it out and make a beautiful, valuable article. It implies proof with a view to determine whether something is worthy to be received (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 8:2, 8; Galatians 6:4; 1 John 4:1).
 2. The word "temptations" means attempting to cause someone to sin. Satan is referred to as the "tempter" (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). Jesus frequently had to deal with people who were trying to entrap Him (Matthew 16:1; Luke 10:25).
- C. The testing of our faith proves its strength. A man who is bed-ridden week after week might think that he is strong. However, it is only after he sets out doing work which requires strength that he discovers how wrong he was.
- D. The proof of God's love lies within suffering (Hebrews 12:3-11). We take the most trouble with what is the most valuable. Suffering is valuable because our trials make us more like Christ. We cannot be like the thorn-crowned head without feeling the thorns. Our sorrows help us to live nearer to God, and we paradoxically often find that our worst days physically are our best days spiritually. Our prosperity are

like waves that dash against the shore, but our sorrows are like the receding wave which draws us back into the depths of God where we need to anchor ourselves.

III. ***Our Faith Will Be Triumphant***

- A. A wonderful lesson we learn from the Bible is the triumph of faith.
 - 1. In Christ we see the willingness to do His Father's will because of the anticipated joy of being with His Father (Hebrews 5:8; 12:3).
 - 2. In Job we see the complete reliance in God to vindicate and reward him in the end (Job 42:1-6).
- B. The child of God, as a faithful soldier, stands steadfast without yielding to outside forces or pressures and turns them into greatness and glory (James 1:2-4).
 - 1. God intended patience in trials to produce important effects on the soul, and we should not hinder them. Every one who is afflicted should want these good effects of affliction be produced in their mind.
 - 2. The three friends of Daniel withstood the pressure of bowing down to a pagan image. When they did, Nebuchadnezzar glorified God (Daniel 3:16-17, 28-30).
 - 3. When the disciples of Jesus assumed that a man's blindness was the result of the man's sin, He did not consider the man's suffering to be wasted or capricious, because God would be glorified in the man's life (John 9:1-5). So it will be with us!
- C. Do not be bitter, resentful, or afraid because you suffer. God says you are blessed (Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:12-14). We find happiness in undergoing trials and overcoming trials by the assistance of God (Acts 5:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5). We will receive a crown of life (James 1:12)!
- D. It is impossible to trust God too much (Hebrews 13:5-6). My closest, dearest friend can only go to the point of death with me, and then they can help me no longer. However, even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil because God is with me (Psalm 23:4). And God is always the same God (James 1:17). If His character is worth my confidence today in good times, it will be worth my confidence tomorrow in bad times. If He could change, my faith in Him would change, but if He is always the same true, faithful, loving, and tender God, ruling all things by His power, there is no reason why my faith should change.
- E. Many people have trusted in themselves and been deceived; many have trusted in their wealth and been disappointed; thousands have relied on friends and been betrayed; but if we trust in God, we will be blessed and triumphant, no matter what type of trial we undergo.

Conclusion. Many of our questions as to the “why” of suffering are left unanswered. However, in the case of Job, he came out of the furnace of affliction a less self-righteous man, possessing a deeper faith in God, and a humble trust he did not know before, and which he could not have learned in any other school (Job 23:10). The important lesson to learn is that the presence of suffering does not mean God does not love you. On the contrary, Christ came and suffered, taking punishment that He did not deserve. Through His suffering, He brings hope, glory, dignity, and comfort to all who suffer (Hebrews 2:17-18). God is mindful of our suffering, and through it He can work to His glory and to the development of the trusting soul that suffers.

Satan asked God, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:9). His point was to ask if man merely serves God for the blessings he receives. If this is the only motivation, can God trust man to serve Him when there is no reward in sight, but simply out of love, reverence, and righteousness? Can we continue to believe in the goodness, benevolence, and power of God when we are suffering inexplicable physical or emotional pain? Job and Christ show us faith which triumphs in the face of adversity.

When hardships come that torment you with anguish, you can look through your tears to the loving Father, trusting His good purpose, and you will be strong. Suffering is the mercy of God and we should be thankful that God treats us like sons. We all wish to hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”