

## The Body and Its Triumph

***“In which you rejoice, if now for a little time it is necessary having been made sorry by manifold testings, in order that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried through fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . .”*** (I Peter 1:6,7).

However the Church may try to press the point that for believers (especially those who “have enough faith”) “life can be beautiful.” The reality is that for the most part life is troublesome, if not tragic. But we were never promised anything different in the New Testament. In the Old Testament prosperity and well-being were the rewards of fidelity to God. That was the only way that the people could be assured of His presence. In the New Testament, possessing the Spirit of Christ within, life is on an entirely different basis. And thus Paul, one of the outstanding servants of Christ, was constantly harassed by Satan and, for the most part, lived a life of affliction, as far as this world is concerned. But he was strong in his conviction that affliction was the lot of the believer on the earth, and declared to the Corinthians, *“Though our outward man perish, yet is our inward man renewed day by day.”* But these are ideas which we have expressed quite often in our writings. Now we look again at testings from the perspective of triumph.

The Greek word—*peirazo*—is used both of tests of faith and circumstance, as well as evil and morality. In the latter case, James speaks of the temptations of Satan as rising out of the vulnerability of our human desires. Peter speaks here of the tests of faith. Obviously the tests involving earthly afflictions arise out of the reality of a world gone mad under the jurisdiction of Satan. **But does Satan have a free hand?** Not altogether. God allows things to happen, but has the power to stay the hand of Satan as He chooses.

*But why does He not always choose to hold back the tide of Satan for the sake of the believers?*

This is a poignant question and has to be asked in the wake of the devastations that believers have suffered through the ages. While we humans can never say with certainty just what God is doing, there are clues in the Scripture, including the above text, that it is not God’s purpose to reconstruct Eden on the earth—to sweep away the consequences of evil, even for the believers. It is apparently His purpose to press the believers into the realization of the necessity of keeping one’s focus on the realities of the spirit realm which we share with God. Ultimately that will be our eternal milieu. Paul urges Timothy to *“lay hold on eternal life”* now, rather than waiting for the end of life. We are, after all, truly “spirit” in nature, since our new birth. The whole realm of flesh, including our psychological and physiological and circumstantial realm, is secondary.

Unfortunately, in a large sector of Christendom, it is assumed (falsely) that if you only have enough faith, you can have whatever you want on earth, including its material benefits. The teachings in such circles is that the only thing that prevents one from having an edenic life on the earth is the extent of one’s faith. This has led to much distress and disillusionment, as well as guilt and fear. The extra burden of assuming that one’s afflictions are due to one’s personal inadequacy, has been a major cause of stress among believers. The

afflictions are exceedingly magnified, if one must struggle with the problem of whether or not one is worthy to be helped, or has enough faith, or has engaged in “effectual” praying. There is great peace to be had in being able to put all matters in the Lord’s hands and leave it to Him to do what is best for us. We will never be good enough or have enough faith or pray enough to really feel confident that Lord will help us. Nor, on the other hand, can we ever really determine exactly what it is that God plans to do with us.

*But can we ever ask God for help in the matters of the flesh?*

Most assuredly, yes. He has acted providentially in great numbers of circumstances experienced by the believers. One is always welcome to ask, whether or not one is certain that the request is a valid one. The point really is that if God does not respond in the ways that we hope that He will, we must simply assume that it was not in His purpose. Such an approach relieves considerably the great burden of being ultimately responsible for all that occurs in our lives. In our discussions of faith, we have pointed out that faith is fundamentally an energy process from God and not a matter of human confidence or trust—a product of the emotions. We will truly know the “peace that passes understanding” when we are able merely to put our earthly circumstances in the Lord’s hands and leave it to Him to work out His own purposes.

**The approval of your faith . . .** We are accustomed to thinking of tests as being “human-sided”—Are we going to be able to measure up? The Greek word used here—*dokimos*—focuses more on the approval than on the testing process itself. It is a test to let us have the assurance that we will stand. If the Lord did not think that we would be able to handle it, He would not bring it to us. Paul tells the Corinthians, “*There has no testing taken you but a human one, but God can be relied on who will not permit you to be tested beyond that which you are able; but will provide with the testing also the escape, that you may be able to bear up under it*” (I Corinthians 10:13). And to the Romans Paul said, “*Who are you that judges another servant? To his own Lord he stands or falls; and he shall stand, for the Lord is able to cause him to stand*” (14:4). And Jude says, “*Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy . . .*” (Jude 24).

This present world is under the dominion of Satan (Ephesians 2:1). While God does not always preserve His people from its disasters, He provides the energy of His own faith (a fruit of the Spirit) to sustain our spirits in the midst of its constant turbulence. And so whatever Satan tries to do to destroy the children of God, he does not succeed in getting at their spirits. It is to the greater glory of God that the spirits of believers remain steadfast in the midst of tragedy than that they are kept from tragedy. The question—“Why did God do this?”—is not a valid one. To the statement “The rain falls on the just and unjust,” may be added the counterpart—“storms fall upon the just and the unjust.” In the famed story of the “storm at sea,” Christ would have preferred the disciples to have stayed in the storm than to find it necessary to still the storm for their sakes. As long as Christ was in the boat, it would not sink.

What are the “trials by fire,” if not the tragedies and disasters and catastrophes of this world? Whatever befalls you in this world, your spirit will remain steadfast, because the energy of Christ within you is steadfast. He surrounds us

with the shield of faith, which is the shield of His energy holding Satan at bay. Your flesh may be battered, but your spirit will always be steadfast. And that, of course, is the triumph of the believer and more precious than gold that perishes. It will be found unto praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul assures the Philippians of this—*“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6). Whatever happens on the mountain, the sun is always there even though it be hidden by the clouds.

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