

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” James 1:12

“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” Ps. 46:10

GODS' TESTING FIRES

by Craig Marlatt

“Show me a man who has never been tested and I’ll show you a man to be wary of”. That’s what a friend once said to me, and I’ve often pondered over his words as I’ve looked back over some of the folks I’ve known in my life. There’s something about trials that we as Christians hate. I’m not talking about the normal daily trials of everyday life, but rather the kind that seem to drop into your life from nowhere, without any apparent cause or reason. You know the type: the ones that get you right where it hurts, just when you think you’ve got it all together. Or another kind that seems to show up right when you’re at your wits end and you know that you couldn’t take even one more problem without exploding.

Although many Christians blame all such experiences on the devil, the scriptures clearly state that God himself is actively involved in the trying of our faith (James 1:3; Job 42:10,11). As much as we dislike trials while we are in the midst of them, in retrospect we usually find them to be some of the most valuable experiences of our lives.

Yet the answer does not lie in passive inactivity. God is not calling us into ‘spiritual masochism’ when He tells us to “Count it all joy when [we] fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2). After all, it’s not the temptation that brings us joy (that would be a perverse mentality and God is not a God of perversity). Rather it’s knowing that “the trying of our faith worketh patience.” So then our rejoicing is not in the trial itself, but in the result that it brings: patience (endurance).

Some years ago there was a popular anecdote going around among some Christian circles. Some were saying we should not pray for patience because in so doing we are inviting trials into our lives. That may sound like good advice to someone who is just trying to get by in the Christian life, but if you are making a serious endeavour to be a mature Christian trials become a very necessary ingredient of your faith.

But there again this is not a calling to spiritual passivity. We are to be using our faith against the enemy. According to Ephesians 6:12-17 we are to recognize that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places. We are to take the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand in the evil day. The key to this battle is found at the end of verse 13: “. . .and having done all, to stand.”

It is in the act of standing that our testing becomes fruitful. Many times we may feel that there is no more strength left in us to fight. It is then that we must be still and know that He is God! After we have done all that we can, we’re instructed to stand still, and see the glory of God. He is a God of war and He will fight the battle for us. When we are weak (in ourselves) then He is strong in us (2 Corinthians 12:9,10). God is faithful to hold us up. We need only to trust in him when we are going through our trials.

Because we are His handiwork, He is making us into fine gold that is worth something. In order to process that fine gold there must inevitably be some heat applied to our lives so that the dross can be brought to the surface and then removed. When He is

finished we will be thankful for His merciful hand and that He allowed us to be tempted and tested, yet brought us through the fire into the glorious victory of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.