

Sermon: Fireproof Faith – 1 Peter 1:6-9 – Pastor Howard T. Washington

Christians are called to have a growing faith, built up by prayer, the encouragement of others and through testing.

A. FAITH THAT ENDURES TESTING WILL PROVIDE STRENGTH, PRODUCE JOY AND PROMOTE LOVE.

- a. God uses difficult circumstances to bring in us something better. If God uses faith like it is gold, he puts us through the process of purification. Gold goes through a process of refinement. To purify it requires extreme heat to liquify and to separate out the impurities. What comes out of the process is 99.5% pure gold.
- b. Peter uses the purification process of gold to illustrate how our faith is tested. I am putting you through circumstances so that you can come out as pure gold—to call us, to test us and to prove us.
- c. Gold does not burn up. God wants us to shape and mold us. Most of us want God's forgiveness, but not his purification process. Sometimes we have issues like rebellion, jealousy, etc. The process of purification will allow those things to come to the surface and be pulled out.
- d. Anything that happens is either ordered or allowed. There is a purpose in everything you are going through. Either you caused it and it is a consequence of your actions or it is allowed to make you better, not bitter. Not everything will be a "feel good" situation. It is our faith that directs, motivates and allows us to do what he is calling us to do.
- e. Fireproof faith is faith tested by fire. My situation will allow me to build my faith. It points us past our trials. Our trials are temporary.
- f. Remember the song: "Trouble Don't Last Always" - Trials and temptation are temporary. It has a beginning and an ending. One of these days, it will be over. Our faith points us to what is beyond. Our feelings are in the moment. Faith helps us to see better days are coming. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.
- g. Our faith does not fail during the crisis. See Malachi 3:3. Trials burn away our self-reliance and self-confidence. God changes things so I have to trust in him. Well laid plans that changed that now require you to depend on God. Just trust me! I knew you before you were born. You do not have to figure it out all by yourself. The development of your faith is for your own good.

i. A FAITH THAT CANNOT BE TESTED CANNOT BE TRUSTED – Warren Wiersbe

B. GOD WANTS US TO HAVE FIREPROOF FAITH BECAUSE:

- a. **Fireproof faith endures trials. (V. 6)** – Fireproof says God is with me and if I go to go through the furnace—I have fireproof face and I will stand in the midst of the fire. Look at the text and review the words, "If Necessary". God is in control and knows how much heat I can handle. He knows how I need to turn out. He knows how hot the fire needs to be to get me where he wants me to be. If I don't go to him on my own, he will allow the fire...if necessary. Ex: Without rain, there are no flowers. Trials meet needs. Helps us in ways we did not know we needed to be helped. There is no discrimination.
 - i. Trials prove our sincerity. It will show where your heart really is. There is a purpose for the pressure.
- b. **Fireproof faith produces joy. (6-7)** – Find joy "in" not "over" my circumstances. Remember where the source of your joy comes from. The joy of the Lord is our strength. He is the center of our joy. You find joy in knowing that he has saved and kept you. You can find joy in the Lord. Your circumstance changes, but God does not change. Where is the joy? Knowing I have a relationship with Jesus. When somebody walks out, he never left. If he allowed it, I am going to go through it and be better because of it. Our joy can get mixed up with our feelings. Whatever we experience in Christ, we have the victory. Despite the situation that I am in, I find joy in Him. His promises are "Yea" and "Amen".

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- i. Paul prayed repeatedly for the thorn in his flesh to be removed. On the 3rd attempt, Jesus replies, “My grace sufficient”. If God has not answered my prayer the way I wanted it to, remember “My Grace Is Sufficient” and this world cannot take around my joy.
- c. **Fireproof faith demonstrates love. (V.8-9)** – Your fireproof faith allows you to love God even though you have not seen him. During the fire, we rejoice and demonstrate our love to God by trusting him—following Him during the trial. By grace, we have been saved through FAITH. Demonstrates love by worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Regardless of my circumstances, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. We cannot our circumstances to change our faith. It is designed to make us stronger—“if necessary”. Look at what God allowed because he loved us—the plan to send his Son, Jesus Christ who was the perfect lamb to be sacrificed so that we could understand the value of having faith. God demonstrated his love for us in the circumstance of our sin. (Romans 5:8).

Challenge:

Don't allow yourself to get bitter, get better. I don't look like what I have been through. When you get through this situation it will surprise you and others. It is because you allowed God to be present and he work in and through you. Let God touch your hearts and change you on the inside and make you better. It is important to allow yourselves to receive God's love and to allow your circumstance to be given to him. Lord, mold me, make me, fill me. It is in those times of pressure, that His “still small voice” in the middle of the situation ministers to us to be still and know he is God.

Your faith will increase if you allow your trial to burn away bitterness, jealousy, hatred. You are going to come out pure. “I did not realize I needed this.” I thought I could handle every situation. When will you accept the fact that God is working in you to make you better? He is calling you to depend on Him. Lord, what do you want me to do rather than take matters in my own hands. Have you ever negotiated with God? You know how I feel God? Illustration: God wanted Pastor to pour into somebody. He took a situation that hurt Pastor's heart to show me His love. Be obedient and do what God tells you. God told him to invest and pray for a person in 30 days. Now, I see.

You cannot let your emotions dictate your response to what God is calling you to do. Whatever he is calling to you to has impact on those around you.

Study Questions:

1. How has this message impacted your view of trials in your life?
2. As you think about trials in your life, what are examples of God at work to make you better?
3. How has your view of prayer changed as a result of this message?
4. What should our response be when God does not answer our prayer the way we wanted Him to?
5. What are barriers that prevent us from allowing God to refine us?
6. What will you do differently when you are someone close to you is going through a trial?
7. Can there be joy without testing? Why or why not?
8. What are some of the consequences of not allowing Christ into your trials?