

“The End of Your Faith”

By Paul R. Blake

“That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls” (1Peter 1:7-9).

What a precious, beautiful truth; that the trying of our faith produces the end of our faith! What madness is this? Not madness at all, rather a profound spiritual truth that supersedes the reasoning of men.

For some, the sore testing of their faith brings about an end to belief in Almighty God, His great wisdom, and His deep love for humankind. But, that's not "the end of... faith" that Peter was talking about. The impulsive apostle was inspired to write that our trials bring about the logical conclusion and proper fulfillment of our faith, not its demise. The effects God purposes with the temptations He allows us to face (1Cor. 10:13) are manifold. He designed faith to be the regulator that permits us to properly channel our tests, suffering, and burdens into spiritually productive results.

Faith is the means through which God's power preserves us in a righteous condition until the end. Peter said, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (vs. 5). By faith, we apprehend the will of God in obeying the Gospel (Acts 8:36-37). By faith, we are moved to do the works of righteousness for which we have been created (Eph. 2:10).

Through faith, Jesus paid for our sins. Faith becomes the means through which it becomes possible that atonement could be made. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Rom. 3:23-25).

Faith is the avenue through which it becomes possible to obtain salvation. (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 4:13-25; James 2:14-26) Paul told Timothy, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim. 3:15).

In addition, faith gives us access to the promises God has given to the righteous. “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 3:12). “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14).

Without faith, we would have no idea where we came from... “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3); or where we are going when this world is folded up... “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Peter 1:5).

Our faith is crucial. Without faith, our works become pointless, our lives become useless, and life beyond the grave becomes hopeless. Because of the vital nature of our faith, God desires that it should wax stronger so that it will not succumb to trials in this life, but end by being fulfilled in the hereafter when faith becomes sight. Therefore, while our faith must not end while breath exists in our bodies, at the same time we anticipate the end of our faith, the eternal salvation of our souls in heaven.

Now, how can we prevent our faith from ending while waiting for the end result of our faith? Peter gave us the answer: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need

be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Peter 1:6-7).

The trying of our faith is the God-given way of determining the genuineness of our faith. The testing of our faith is the Divine plan for strengthening our faith. Though briefly in heaviness of heart, we can take joy in the fact that our faith, so crucial to our eternal salvation, is being looked after by God. He must truly love us to see that our faith gets tested regularly. He must care a great deal for us to allow us carefully measured trials to make our faith and hope more sure. Indeed we can rejoice that the burdens we bear will serve to prevent our faith from ending while we wait to see "the end of our faith... the salvation of our souls."

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Dealing with the Unrepentant By Greg Gwin

Are you discouraged because you can't get someone to change? Maybe you've worked long and hard to teach someone what they should do to be saved, but they simply won't accept it. It's clear to you and to them that there are things amiss in their life, but they just won't commit to do what is right. Or, it might be some erring brother in the church. You have struggled to convince him that he has sinned and needs to repent, but he steadfastly refuses to admit his sin and turn back to God. Surely, these are discouraging situations.

When we face these difficult scenarios, it should help us to remember that others before us have faced the same woes. In fact, when we "hit a wall" while trying to convert the lost or restore the erring, we are joining the good company of God's faithful servants through the ages. Their words certainly strike a familiar chord:

--"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Psalms 10:4).

--"... they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return" (Jer. 5:3).

--Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent..." (Zech. 7:12).

--"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

--"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5).

So you see, your frustrations at being unable to change the ways of unrepentant folks is not new. Others have endured the same things. The key thing is for us to stay committed to our task of faithfully serving God. "...be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Cor. 15:58).

Ten Rules of a Harmful System of Religion

1. The leader must be in control of every aspect at all times.
2. When problems arise, find a guilty party to blame immediately.
3. Don't admit to making mistakes.
4. Never point out the reality of a situation.
5. Never express your feelings unless they are positive.
6. Don't ask questions, especially if they are tough ones.
7. Don't do anything outside of your self-perceived role.

8. Don't trust anyone.
9. Nothing is more important than soliciting money for the organization.
10. At all cost, keep up the image of the organization or the family.