

The Test of Faith (1 Peter 1:5-7)



A. Faith must be Tested

1. Apostle Peter says (1 Pet 1:5-7) we who live in the last days are protected by the power of God - through faith! It is through FAITH we are protected by the power of God. How important our faith is then as we live in the last days. True faith is not empty words. Those who possess faith demonstrate it.
 - (i) Without having seen the Lord, you believe in Him and love Him with all your heart (1:8, C.f. Gal 5:8 – ‘faith working through love.’)
 - (ii) You rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory even during the time of trials (1:8-9). How is this possible? Because ‘living hope’ is birthed in our hearts by the power of God. This hope does not die. This hope lives on beyond the grave into eternity. Just as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead so will we who love the Lord and obey His voice. But there is more cause for rejoicing. There is eternal inheritance kept in heaven for you. Peter calls it, *‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.’* (1:4)

Therefore, your faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ actively protects you in the last days. This supernatural faith imparts in you deep love for the Lord without even seeing Him. Furthermore, faith gives you the ability to greatly rejoice in God with the living hope of salvation even while you go through trials. How?

2. *‘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, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.’* (1:6-7)

Our reason for great rejoicing in the midst of fiery trials is because these trials test the genuineness of our faith. Both the word ‘genuineness’ (dokimion) and ‘test’ (dokimazo) comes from the same Greek word referring to the ‘refining process of precious metals like gold and silver.’ Our faith is precious beyond measure in the sight of God. It directly results in our eternal inheritance in heaven. So, God Himself refines our faith even through the fiery trials in this life. You may say, ‘But I don’t want any trials to test my faith.’ But untested faith, unrefined faith is not worth anything, just as precious metals that are unrefined do not have much value. All true faith is tested. Faith that is worth something of value in God’s eyes will be tested by fire.

Jesus said to the Laodicean church, *‘I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire (i.e., tested faith) that you may be rich...’* (Rev 3:18) There are extremely valuable things in God. If you want them, you must buy them from God. Not with money, but by investing with your life in a costly way (C.f. Is 55:1).

3. How did the ancient people refine gold and silver? The precious metals were placed in a crucible over intense heat which melted the metals along with the impurities. The furnace had to be heated to the highest temperature it could generate around 1,000C°. Gold melts at 1064 C° and silver at 962 C°. The refiner would lean over the crucible and skim off the impurities which floated to the surface of the liquid metal. He would patiently go over the process again and again until there are no more impurities left, and the precious metal became pure.

How did the refiner know the metal was truly purified? When he could see the undistorted image of his face reflected on the surface of the liquid metal. Silver is the most reflective material found on earth. When all the impurities are removed by heat, it would be the perfect mirror. Even today, high-quality mirrors are produced by spraying a thin layer of silver (or gold) onto a glass surface.

When is our faith refined as pure gold? When God can see His image reflected off us without distortion. Our faith will be complete then. God will do it with His people in the last days before His coming.

‘But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.’ (Mal 3:2-3)

‘Behold I have refined you but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.’ (Is 48:10)

B. [How to Respond to the Test of Faith \(James 1:2-4; Rom 5:1-2, 11; Heb 12:1-2\)](#)

1. How do you respond when you are going through fiery trials? *'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)

'Consider it pure joy...' (NIV) Why? Because testing of our faith produces endurance (perseverance) and the outcome of the testing is a character that is complete, mature, and lacking in nothing. When we see this holy purpose of God in the trials that come our way to refine our faith, then we can agree with the Lord, so He can have His way in us. We do not enjoy trials, but we trust God has our best interest in His heart.

2. Paul in Romans 5:1-3 teaches we are justified by faith and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he describes the process we must go through to achieve this end purpose.

(i) We exult in the hope of the glory of God (5:2).

(ii) We also exult in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance (endurance), and perseverance produces proven character (Gk. 'dokime'). This tested character is the basis of the living hope, and this hope leads to the love of God being poured out in our hearts - the goal of the Christian life. Why does Paul say we exult in tribulation? It is a necessary process of our faith maturing which leads to proven and tested character, i.e., Christlikeness - which leads to hope and love of God.

(iii) Rom 4:11 – we also exult in God through whom we received the reconciliation. That is the final stage of rejoicing (exulting). God Himself becomes the centre of our joy. He works all these into our lives through the testing of our faith.

3. Then we need to keep looking onto Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith (Heb 12:1-2). You are a relay runner in a cosmic stadium, packed to capacity with heaven's witnesses. You are the final runner, running the final lap of the cosmic race. What athletes put themselves through to get to the Olympics, just to get a chance to run!

Somehow, by the grace of God, you are in the centre stage of the giant coliseum, and the cloud of witnesses watching you is literally larger than at any previous generations before you. All the generations of people of faith in Heb 11, and all the generations after them have stacked up together for this moment to watch you run. The cloud of witnesses is thicker than ever with all eyes on you.

This cloud of witnesses is cheering you on, bearing witness of God for whom they have run their race. Can you hear them cheering you on and witnessing to you about their race of faith? The stakes are higher than ever before. Now it is your turn to run. Apostle Paul testifies, *'For I am already poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.'* (2 Tim 4:6-7)

4. The writer of Hebrews tells us each of us must run our race and complete the course. First, you need an athlete's attitude. Athletes are dedicated to running their race. They do not indulge in things that can slow them down. We are to give ourselves the best chance to run the race and win. How?

First, get rid of the besetting sin that easily entangles you. You cannot run well when you are entangled by a net of besetting sin. Also, get rid of any unnecessary weights that may not be sinful but will slow you down. The course you are to run is set by the Lord who started your journey of faith. Your race is unique and different from all others.

How do I run a race that is unique and different from all? By fixing our eyes on Jesus. Jesus alone is the author and the finisher of our faith. Jesus saw the joy set before him, and He despised the shame of the cross, and finally sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. That is how we are to run our race also.

Jesus' last exhortation to the church in Laodicea was, *'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'* (Rev 3:21-22)