

Wednesday, January 27, 2016 - When Our Faith is Tested

When we come to Christ, we must make a clean and clear break with the sins of our past. Sin-loving friends and relationships will continue to contaminate our environment and drag us back to the 'old man' persona we were prior to our sins being washed away through our contact with the blood of Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-4).

'Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals' (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Sinful practices have to be quit cold-turkey, leaving no place for satan (Ephesians 4:27; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Sinful trappings must be destroyed, regardless the cost. Your soul has a value far greater than anything this world can bribe you with! (Acts 19:19). Paul left his former life when he became a Christian. He said, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ . . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:7, 13–14). He then applied his example as a general rule for all Christians: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (3:15). To the Corinthians he wrote, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. . . let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 6:17–7:1; Acts 2:40; Revelation 18:4).

Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but God provides us the ability and the help to bring out our best (1 Cor. 10:13). Solomon wrote, "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts" (Proverbs 17:3). James wrote of this: "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. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:12–15). We should expect testing; we should invite it. David said, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalm 26:2).

True faith is always tested. Christians face both the initial challenge of leaving the world behind and the persistent challenge of persevering until the end (Revelation 2:10). Certainly there are times Christians will face a unexpected, emotional, and/or extremely difficult challenge to their faith. When Jesus was asked the question, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" (Luke 13:23), He did not respond by saying, "No, it is easy enough to be saved. Don't sweat the small stuff." Instead He said unto them, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). Strive here is a strong word (agōnizomai) which means "to struggle, to compete for a prize, fight." Too often, I'm afraid, we don't view heaven for the value and beauty

it is! We must want/desire to FIGHT through the roadblocks satan places in our path to heaven!

Our test may come in the following fashion:

- It may not make sense. Some, for instance, have difficulty making sense of God's command to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). They may wonder what water covering the body has to do with erasing sin from the soul. No matter, true faith obeys God even when it does not make complete sense.
- It may go against our natural emotions. When the church is forced to withdraw fellowship from a personal friend, it can be hard to follow through and participate in this effort to win back this soul (1 Corinthians 5:1–11). A wife's natural inclination may be to lead, or a husband's to follow, but following God's roles for the family always brings the best results (Ephesians 5:23–33).
- It may involve our family relationships. Putting God ahead of our spouses, children, and parents can be hard, but total allegiance is the only thing God will accept.
- It may be that others will dissuade us from it, if they knew what we are about to do. No one is a true friend who encourages us to disobey God and endanger our souls.

Some of God's commands are "hard sayings" (John 6:60).

- At some time in our Christian life, we may have to decide between defending our children's actions and God's Scripture.
- We will likely sin in a public way and have to decide whether we will be humble enough to walk down the aisle and ask our brethren to forgive and forget (Acts 8:22; James 5:16).
- We may find ourselves strongly tempted to forsake our wedding vows for the exciting touch of another (2 Samuel 11). The heat of the moment can be cooled by remembering David's hard lesson (2 Samuel 11–12) and his son's inspired dictum: "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (Proverbs 6:32).
- We may have a really bad experience at the hand of a church member or get crossways with an entire congregation about direction and doctrine (3 John 1:9–11).

Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:34–39).

Light is as much opposed to darkness as darkness is to light. When one obeys Jesus, he must love him with all his heart. He must quit doing the things that are wrong and do the things that are right. Those who do not obey the gospel are opposed to this. Jesus would that all men believe in him and obey him. This would result in a loving relationship between all parties. However, when one

family member obeys the gospel and others do not, it causes this division. It is the one who opposes Christ that causes the division. Following Christ makes one a better husband or wife, son or daughter, mother or father, son-in-law or daughter-in-law, mother-in-law or father-in-law. The Christian acts kindly and in love though he puts God first and does not compromise. Those of the world have no such restraint and thus are responsible for the division. The closest earthly tie must take second place to one's loyalty, devotion and obedience to Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, 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" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Christians can have courage in all circumstances because Christ will give them the victory. In order for Christians to have this victory, they must be faithful. The resurrection proves their labor will be rewarded. They must be steadfast. This means they must stand firm in their convictions and remain faithful.

Are you "The Rock" for Christ you should and could be?