

Monday, August 28, 2017 - What Shakes Your Faith?

Satan knows us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. His whole agenda is to place us in positions where our faith is shaken or shattered. It can occur through a variety of events such as tragedy, disappointment, loss, fear, etc. The question each of us must answer: Is my faith strong enough to withstand the trials and persecutions I WILL face in life?

The first chapter of 1 Peter offers us tremendous insight into the key Peter offers his readers to deal with the persecutions that they WOULD be or had been dealing with in their life.

1 Peter 1:3-5 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

It is God who provided the means, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, that men might have the forgiveness of sins, and obtain hope. The hope will be realized at the last day.

Our joy will NEVER be found on this earth. He tells his readers in 2 Peter 3:7-13, "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells..." Because our joy will never be found on this earth or in the things of this earth, Peter tells Christians to look forward to our reward, a home in heaven.

The apostle Paul, like Jesus, warned those he converted of persecutions to come: "They returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21, 22). He reminded Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

But Jesus did not just forewarn his disciples that they would be persecuted. He set them an example of remaining steadfast in the face of threats and slander and false accusations and eventually a phony trial, torture, scourging and death by crucifixion. Jesus was not asking his disciples to endure anything worse than what he himself would endure to remain faithful to God.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household!” (Mt. 10.24-25)

A similar sentiment is found in John: If the world hateth you, know ye that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. (Jn. 15:18-20) Again, we see that Peter also was in a particularly good position to exhort others to be faithful in enduring persecutions because they knew of the trials, which he had endured for the gospel's sake. His steadfastness in the face of beatings and imprisonment and threats against his life was very much a part of the Christian example that was so important for those he taught.

Satan will not allow us to go quietly through life just waiting for that day to hear the words, “Enter in thou good and faithful servant.” Peter's encouragement was for Christians to make the firm decision to obey God rather than men, to rejoice at being counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus, and have zeal in preaching the gospel in spite of persecution. God is faithful. We respect, revere and love God because of His love for us. The duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). This type of fear is not doubting God but stems from not understanding how all together for good. God has always done what is best for men, so be confident that He has your best interests in mind. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Trials, tribulations and persecutions help Christians grow into the holy character that God wants them to have. Peter reminds his readers that their goal is not on this earth, but it is "reserved in heaven." It is easy to fall into the trap of believing that the most important thing about life is present happiness. What a mistake this is! In placing one's confidence in this present world, one is trading an incorruptible inheritance in Heaven for a corruptible world that fades away. Peter places two choices before us: present happiness in a corruptible world that is fading away, or eternal joy in Heaven.

Because of the great blessings in Christ, Christians can rejoice. Even when they suffer trial and tribulation, they can rejoice when they understand the purpose of these.

The strength of your faith to withstand what Satan throws at you will determine whether you live with a happiness that means nothing or a joy that means everything.