

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Peter 1:3-9**.
- B. Our living hope and God's shield will not protect us from grief--those shielded by God's power *will* suffer grief.
- C. Peter compares the trial process to the process gold endures when it is refined by fire.
- D. God allows our faith to be made more precious by using Satan against himself.

I. FIRST, REFINING BURNS AWAY THE IMPURITIES.

- A. Untried, unproven faith may not be faith at all. Many people who think they have faith in Jesus actually follow an idea not a Master. See the parable of the soils (Mt. 13:20-21).
"And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away."
- B. Notice that Jesus says, these folks have **no root**. God allows Satan to bring trials into our lives to enable our faith to grow roots--this way our faith will last.
- C. Our faith is our most precious possession. The trials we suffer burn the impurities from our faith, making it more precious than gold.

II. SECOND, REFINING BRINGS THE GOLD TO A HIGH GLOSS.

- A. Goldsmiths today have methods to measure the purity levels of gold--you pay more for 24K gold than 10K gold. First century goldsmiths used a simpler method: when the gold reached a level of gloss that he could see himself in it, it was deemed precious and valuable.
- B. The same is true of the people of God. When they reflect Him, they are more valuable in His cause. God wants us to be participants in His divine nature (2Pet. 1:4).
For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
- C. "Grief through all sorts of trials" burns away our doubts, fears, and sinful desires. Those impurities distort our reflection of God, keeping those around us from seeing Him clearly. Jesus reflected the Father; "If you have seen Me you have seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).
- D. Any Xian not yet reflecting God to the world may discover that God will use trials to change them. If one has fear or doubt, trials may come to prove God as trustworthy. If a Xian persists in some weakness or sin, trials may come to help refocus on the important.

III. THIRD, REFINING MAKES THE GOLD MALLEABLE.

- A. Like gold, Xians are best shaped when malleable.
- B. To be malleable is **to be capable of being shaped/molded**; it requires being flexible/pliable.
- C. I've learned that I'm much more malleable--pliable--when I suffer trials. When things are going well, I continue on course and have little regard for any interruption or redirection. But when trials come I find myself seeking God and open to His direction (2Cor. 12:7-10).
And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
- D. To keep Paul pliable, God allowed a "thorn in the flesh" to remain and did not take it away. But Paul didn't resent his suffering; "when I am weak, I am strong." See Phil. 3:7-10.

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

- E. To know “the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings” kept him open to the leading and direction of God. He didn’t resent it; he appreciated it.

IV. **FOURTH, REFINING INCREASES THE STRENGTH OF THE GOLD.**

- A. Goldsmiths make gold stronger each time they put it through the annealing process.
- B. Annealing is the process of heating, hammering, shaping, and cooling gold. Because gold can be ruined by too much heat, the annealing process isn’t a single step but a series of steps.
- C. Think about it: multiple steps to become what the goldsmith wants; strength through a series of fires. Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?
- D. God’s major lessons don’t come from a textbook. They come from experiences in life that produce at least some pain and struggling. Each experience should make us stronger spiritually and emotionally than what we were before.
- E. None of us enjoys hurting. We avoid it if we can. Yet every Xian who has suffered gained strength they didn’t have before. Faith that has endured a trial is stronger than it was before.

V. **FIFTH, REFINING INCREASES THE VALUE.**

- A. One goldsmith remarked,
“No matter what I’ve done to the gold to refine, shape, and design it, I must reheat it to take it to the next step. I have to put it into the fire again. Here’s something I’ve learned about Xian living that is parallel to refining gold: If God want again to change your shape or design to make you more valuable to His work, He must put you through another fire, no matter what you’ve already been through. Each stage makes you more useful than the one before, but each requires you to go through the refining trial again.”
- B. While I understand that principle, I don’t always enjoy it.
- C. This process is exemplified in the life of Joseph. God prepared Joseph for the greatest task of his life by selling him into slavery and sentencing him to prison. These two “annealings” put him in the right place at the right time to save Egypt from starvation.
- D. Joseph summarized his life by saying it was all God’s plan for him (Gen. 45:5-8; 50:20).
(Gen 45:8) “Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.”
(Gen 50:20) “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

IV. **CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.**

- A. A careful goldsmith never lets the gold become too hot or too cold. Our God is the same way with us (1Cor. 10:13—not too hot; 2Cor. 12:8,9—not too cold).
- B. When under pressure, I often ask for complete and immediate deliverance. Sometimes God grants that request; but more often not. Sometimes, He allows me to absorb it and learn all the lessons I can. Ending the trial too quickly teaches me nothing.
- C. Always remember and cherish Rom. 8:28.
And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.