

The Testing and Refining of our Faith

1 Peter 4:12-19

"I am deeply persuaded that many of us struggle with the question of God's goodness, faithfulness, and love, not because he has been unfaithful to any promise in any way, but because we simply are not on his agenda page. Our agenda, our definition of what a good God should give us, is a life that is comfortable, pleasurable, and predictable; one in which there's lots of human affirmation and an absence of suffering.

God is not working to deliver to you your personal definition of happiness. If you're on that agenda page, you are going to be disappointed with God and you are going to wonder if he loves you. God is after something better—your holiness, that is, the final completion of his redemptive work in you. The difficulties you face are not in the way of God's plan, they do not show the failure of God's plan, and they are not sign he has turned his back on you. No, those tough moments are a sure sign of the zeal of his redemptive love." Tripp

- I. Peter teaches several things about suffering to help us gain a biblical mindset toward the fiery trials we will experience as a follower of Jesus Christ. The fact that we are believers means that God will refine our faith. No one is exempt from that. He refines our faith in a number of ways, but the primary way he does that is by bringing suffering into our lives. His will is to change us more and more into the likeness of his Son Jesus Christ, which means that he will do what is necessary to change us for his glory.

1 Peter 1:6-7

James 1:2-4

Romans 5:1-5

Phil. 3:7-9

Romans 8:28-29 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

- II. God extends grace toward us by informing us that he takes a very active role in testing and refining our faith. He tells us that he does that by bringing fiery trials, each unique to each one of us, into our lives to prove our faith genuine and to deepen our trust in him. It should not surprise us then, that he would take such a vigorous role in teaching us perseverance so that we may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. It should not surprise us that he brings hardship into our lives to produce in us endurance, character and hope. Instead, it should instill in us a deep appreciation for the work he is doing in our lives to prepare us for the glory of his kingdom.

1 Peter 4:12-13

1 Peter 1:3b

Heb. 12:2-3

"In all Christian suffering Satan is seeking to devour faith (1 Peter 5:8-9). God is seeking to test and refine faith (4:12)." Piper

- III. Peter equates suffering with God's judgment. It is not the kind of judgment that condemns us, but is a judgment based on his steadfast love and mercy toward those he holds dear to his heart. It is a judgment that assesses our character so that he can bring into our lives exactly what is needed to change us and deepen our dependence on him. Our response should be to honor the Lord by committing our souls to him knowing that the work he is doing in our hearts is meant for our spiritual wellbeing.

1 Peter 4:14-19

1 Peter 1:7

Heb. 12:5-6

1 Cor. 1:8-9

"Commit their souls to Him: The word "commit" is a technical one, used for leaving money on deposit with a trusted friend. Such a trust was regarded as one of the most sacred things in life, and the friend was bound by all honor to return the money intact. It is the very word Jesus used when He said, Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. (Luke 23:46) So when Christians commit their souls to Him, they leave their souls in a safe place. God is a faithful Creator, and we can give ourselves to Him as pliable clay in His hands." Guzik

Lamentations 3:22-23 *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Phil 3:10-11 *I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*