

Something to Pray About

By Cindy Sears – September 2008

“You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to be distressed by various trials so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:6-7 (HCSB)

“The disciples are taught to regard their sufferings in the aspect of trials; at once *tests to determine whether their faith is genuine, and exercises to increase its strength*. It is not faith, but the trial of faith, that is here pronounced to be precious. Precisely because faith is the link by which the saved are bound to the Saviour, *it is of unspeakable importance to have faith tested in time and proved to be true*. The trial of gold is precious; for if you sell all that you have, and give away the proceeds for a field that seems to contain the treasure, it is beyond all things necessary to test the glittering heap before the transaction is completed, in order to ascertain that it is really gold. Here the fire and the crucible are the most valuable of all things for the investor. These are his safeguards; he cannot want them.

In like manner, *it is dangerous to venture our eternity on a fair-weather profession; an assay in some form is essential to determine whether there is life or only a name that we live*. The trial of faith by affliction is compared to the testing and purifying of gold by fire. The sufferer, while in the furnace, is encouraged to look up and see a Father in heaven bending over him in all-wise love, and ready to remove the pain as soon as the purpose is affected. The ‘need be’ and the ‘season’ are determined and limited by an omniscient love.

Nor is all over when the trial has come, and burned for a season, and accomplished its purpose here, and passed away. The greatest results will be seen within the veil. When Christ comes the second time to reign, the effect of these trials will appear to his praise...” —Rev. William Arnot, *The Lesser Parables of Our Lord*, 1885, pp.287-288 (Ebenezer UMC Library)

I believe in the surety of my salvation through Jesus Christ my Lord. This is akin to the “once saved, always saved” statement of many evangelicals. But others believe that a person can “lose” his salvation by returning to a sinful life. Aren’t we both right? For Jesus says, “You will recognize them by their fruit...every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit...” (Matthew 7:16-18, HCSB). As repentant believers, our lives are changed. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17, HCSB). If we continue in our old ways and attitudes or dive back into them, doesn’t this signal to us and other people that we have not truly accepted Christ as Lord and Savior? And how do we know for certain that we have turned our whole being over to Christ? Is it not proven to us again and again as we face trials and tribulations, problems and heartaches—and continue to believe in Christ and His love?

So, why do we rejoice in trials? Because we know that God disciplines us as our Father, for we are now “sons of God” (Romans 8:14, NIV). We are not left here to be a happy, fulfilled person, but to be “conformed to the likeness of His Son” (Romans 8:29, NIV). Look and see how God has changed you and is changing you into a person who resembles Jesus Christ more each day. If you are not being changed, then look in your heart and find out why. Are you truly saved or just pretending? Are you following the rules or living in the Spirit with love and power? Jesus reserved His most scathing comments for hypocrites—outwardly righteous or religious, but inwardly filled with all manner of disease and sinfulness. Don’t be a whitewashed grave. Let God test your faith and burn away the dross. And thank Him joyfully.

—Cindy Sears (emphases—italics/underlining—throughout are mine)