

## Fire Tested

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*

1 Peter 1:3-9

When life goes as it should and all is well with the world, faith avails little since life comes easily and following God in these times is a breeze. However, when one’s life darkens in the clouds of despair and suffering, faith either breaks through the clouds or breaks altogether. What value is faith untested? How do we know its value if it lies unused? Do I believe in God because he is God or because of what he gives me? Will my faith stand the fires of living when my life hurtles out of control and no apparent escape is forthcoming? Faith is not for good times but bad. We discover its worth when through using it when life is not as it should be—this is how we find out what we truly value. If my faith is only valuable when life is good, then it really lacks any value at all.

Fire tested is not a cause for jumping up and down for joy, “Yippee! I am suffering!” Yet, it does let us see how valuable our faith is. Do I have the kind of faith that will see me all the way through life—overcoming the extensive testing that reveals my mettle and the true nature of my character? Will my faith see me through all of the traps laid out for me by the evil one? Will gloom rule my life, or will I trust in the one who made me in his image? Not all my life will be smiles, but Christ lives; and if he lives in me now, I will live with him forever when time is no more. Tested by fire does not produce my joy; but when the test is over, and I have passed—there is cause for real celebration.

British philosopher John Hick called this “the vale of soul-making”. By this he means that in this life I forge my heart, my character and my soul by the seemingly small decisions I make each day. How I choose to live when life is not going as I wish says more about my character than when everything is coming up daisies. We learn more of Jesus through how he handled adversity than when he performed miracles. His love for us meant more to him than his own life. This is true character. So how am I shaping my life and character to imitate (for all we can do is but imitate his great love) his love in my life? In Jesus we see all that we should be and can be if we have the faith to see it all the way to the end.

Like Peter’s readers, we have not seen Jesus personally as Peter has. We see him through the eyes of faith. So the question is, “How real is he to me?” What difference does he make in my life when all my life seems to hurt? Do I still call on him when I feel he is not listening? Will I continue to be his no matter what happens? Genuine faith trusts him always and seeks to bring him glory because I know he is there and cares even when I do not feel it.

*Steve Davis*