

The Trial of Faith.

Andrew Bonar:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 1:6,7

The prevailing state of our mind should be great joy - 'Wherein ye greatly rejoice.' Have you got at the Gospel at all if you have not great joy, if it does not every day make you glad? Our joy comes from a great Fountain - Christ Himself. Are you a disciple? Then can you bear to live below this standard? In spite of this joy you may be 'in heaviness through manifold trials.' Indeed, it is your great joy that enables you to bear them. What is the trial of faith? It is the outward pressure of circumstances, the waves dashing upon you as you stand on the Rock of Ages. Christ was tried. He was the crystal vessel, full of the purest water, and Satan was allowed to shake it to see if there was any mud in it, and there was not. The trial of faith came to Abraham in a strange way, threatening to bereave him of his beloved son. Abraham stood the test, and went on step by step till God said, 'Now I know that thou fearest Me,' etc., and the trial ended in 'praise, and honour, and glory.' The 'trial of faith' may come in disappointment in those we trusted in; it may come directly from the devil it may come from the state of the church; it may come from persecutions, bonds, imprisonments. It is quite natural to feel these trials. Down in the trough of the wave, then up again on the crest; that was Paul's experience. Then it is only 'for a season.'

I. God's deep interest in the trial of faith. - He says it is much more important than the goldsmith's trial of his gold. It is said that the goldsmith waits till he sees his face reflected in the gold, then he knows it is ready to be taken out. If we had seen with what intense interest the Father watched His beloved Son when He was 'tried' on the mount of temptation and on Mount Calvary! So with the members of His body. It is said, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,' and the word is literally 'deathpangs' - what they may be suffering at the time of their death. The Lord watches them with intense interest. You have multiplied trials; are you murmuring? Do you say 'It is very hard'? Would you say that to God? He is standing by and saying, 'See how faith sustains this disciple of mine!' Catch His eye, and you will be able to bear the 'trial.'

II. The result of this process. - 'Unto praise and honour and glory,' etc. This means to our praise, to our honour, to our glory. It will be to God's praise and honour and glory, for we will see that all His ways are excellent. An old Puritan says, 'A stick in the water looks crooked. Take it out, and it is quite straight.' So it will be when we look at God's dealings with us. When we see all, we will say of our bitterest sorrows that it would have been unkind in God not to have sent them. But it will be to our praise and honour and glory too. Angels will serve us all the more willingly because we never permitted a doubt or surmise of God's love to enter our mind. We shall have the greater glory, the more we have borne the trial of our faith. We are to be rewarded, not only for work done, but for burdens borne, and I am not sure but that the brightest rewards will be for those who have borne burdens without murmuring. Are you not often saying, 'Oh, that that day would arrive, when God will reveal His Son Jesus Christ!' On that day He will take the lily that has been growing so long among thorns and lift it up to the glory and wonder of all the universe, and the fragrance of that lily will draw forth ineffable praises from all the hosts of heaven.

Is it not worth while being 'tested' for a season ?