

The Trial of your Faith

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[0 : 0 0] 1 Peter 1, 5-9 1 Peter 1, 5-9 it says, of the saints who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time 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 whom having not seen ye love in whom though now ye see him not yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls the trial of your faith

I don't know if you've ever been experiencing that the trial of your faith you know right through history God's own people are a people who have known the reality of persecution persecution it's something we don't really have a skerrick of really let's face it in Australia down through the record of history we see God's people some of them burns hanged drowned and sometimes sadly even by so called Protestants believe it or not people such as ourselves who believe that baptism is for believers in history there was the high churches or the established church of the day the kind of recognised church of the day that believed in infant baptism objected to that and so strongly that they even killed godly men and women who stood for the truth of believers baptism anabaptists really such as we and

God's people through history they've suffered horrible things it's an awful thing to think that people could take such measures and what of us today what of we today here today now in this time in this nation what of us how would we measure up how would we measure up if there was a trial to come a time of trial now these are staggering statistics I just picked this up lately it says and there's different measures of these statistics in fact I chose the measures that were less than some other statistics that I read but what it says in this quote that I picked up 833 Christians will be martyred tomorrow that's amazing isn't it you know the trial of your faith people tonight 833 of our brothers and sisters are going to die for

Christ tomorrow in the 21st century as incredible as it seems it's true 833 Christians 833 believers in Christ killed for their faith and it's been said that over 300,000 Christians are martyred every year these are staggering statistics aren't they we should sit up and take notice of that what about you and me will we face up to the trial of our faith I trust that we will that we will trials will come and they can purify our faith think through the word of God through men and women of the Bible as well as through history for example Job Job he was the most just man on all the earth there's no one who could rate higher in terms of faith his faith was tested he lost everything everything that he had yet he still praised

God as we read in Job 23 10 Job says that even though he have tried me I shall come forth as gold he knew what faith tried and tested would be when Job lost his sons he lost his daughters he lost his wealth he lost his servants and then his own body was afflicted with dreadful sores all over it would have been easy for him to blame God to object to abandon his faith but chapter 1 verse 20 of Job Job fell to the ground and he worshipped he worshipped!

[5 : 1 4] God he held steadfast in his faith even though life for him was full of pain and agony the trial of your faith are you willing to cross the line even when things may not be as you would like it we've heard of Job Shadrach Meshach and Abednego to use their Babylonian names they were challenged by the godless of the day to deny God to deny God to bow down to the idol everybody else was doing it hey this was the end thing you know the king struck up his rock band and everybody had to do their thing do his thing but no they would not bow down to the idol they would not bow down and worship the idol even though it meant the fiery furnace for them you and I face a similar decision will we bow down or will we stand up the king then cast them into the fire we read in Daniel 3 verse 25 he says that the king looked into that fiery place in verse 25 he says lo look behold

I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt and the form of the fourth is like the son of god amen it was the fire it was the fire that put them in the presence of the lord jesus it was the fire that put them in his presence the trial of your faith is a blessed time fiery trials will come god says it will god says it will expected your faith will be tried we've heard of jod of shadrach meshach and abednego what about abraham abraham's faith was tried it was tested it says of him abraham believed god and it was counted to him for righteousness he stood against the odds he went to the extremity in his surrender of faith as he traipsed up that hill carrying the word that he'd hewed himself and his own son willing to surrender all his faith was tried wasn't it and it came forth as gold too is your faith being exercised it's been said you make a muscle stronger by exercising it are you exercising your faith exercising your faith in hebrews 11 we read of the men and women of faith we read there from verse 36 as it names some and then it goes to unnamed ones in hebrews 11 verse 36 it says of these others they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings yea!

they were stoned they were sawn asunder they were tempted they were slain with the sword they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute afflicted and tormented of whom the world was not weary they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth the trial of their faith was not just some kind of slogan it was real it was real it was pain it was suffering it was torment and we see that they obtained a good report by faith an old time writer said this God had one son without sin but no son without a cross no son without a cross it goes with the territory we will face trials he says take up your cross daily and follow me down through history we see the constant persecution of our brothers and sisters in Christ some have put it that since calvary over 43 million

Christians have become martyred 43 million it's no small number and over 50% of these in the last century alone more than 200 million Christians face persecution every day millions of our brothers and sisters in other lands will we be in their number we need more than ever before a back to basics no nonsense Christianity back to basics Christianity not the frothy garbage stuff but the biblical stuff that's what we need we must have that and that's where the rubber hits the road that's where you'll see the faith that endures it won't be about prosperity and all the hoo-ha it'll be about the real stuff real faith gutsy faith faith that endures faith like Daniel's faith

Daniel's faith even in the lion's den it was tested there and it came forth as gold you know the law was don't pray and he didn't he obeyed god's law above man's law and he prayed and he was thrown in the lion's den but we know god undertook and sometimes our lord will lead us through maybe to the lion's den maybe through the dark valleys for all of us we may have been there I know there's something here tonight you've been there maybe you're still there in the dark valley could be death's dark valley one printer put it it's in the valleys of life that we learn that he is the lily of the valleys he's there he is with you and by faith he can hold his hand there even in the dark times even in the valleys even in those dread places even in the fiery place 1 peter 4 12 we read that it says beloved think it not strange don't think it's surprising something unusual it's not a strange thing he says concerning the fiery trial that is to try you as though some strange thing was happening unto you but rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering that when his glory shall be revealed you may be glad also with exceeding joy it's a time of joy a time of suffering but a time of joy it goes on if you be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye for some people that's true for you

[12:07] I know there's fake in workplaces where and I've encountered it too where Christians get mocked and we know it's a reality I was listening to something of late you might suffer financially for it you might be denied promotions because they know you're a Christian and you get that closer scrutiny don't you it happens all the time we know that we that are working in the workforce at this time that it's a reality it goes on verse 16 yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf for the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God and then it goes on verse 19 commit your keeping of your soul to him friends our God is a consuming fire let's not muck around don't muck around don't play games the fire is coming

I really believe the fire is coming and he shall sit as a refiner we read he's the one who's going to sit and he's going to look at the fire and he's going to look at you in the fire and he's going to refine you he's going to purify you in Exodus 20 verse 20 the ten commandments have just been given and the people were fearful as there was thunders and lightning and so on happening and Moses said unto the people fear not for God has come to prove you and that his fear may be before your

faces that you sin not God has come to prove you there's a time that God does prove us it's not a pleasant time but he is refining us he's making us more like Christ and yet we see sadly in that same context that the people of God as it were of that day didn't take them long to get out of line you know they're just seeing the ten commandments given God's wonderful evident presence and then they go and go muck around making a golden calf and just bow down to idols made by men what a sad thing and friends we need to have the fear his fear before our faces that we sin not and then to stand having done all to stand in the evil day stand as we see in

Ephesians 6 what of you tonight what of we tonight will we let God prove us or will we sometimes shy away from his hand when his hand might be heavy on us when his hand might be putting us in situations that are difficult for us he's still with you there he's still with you there though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me take that promise people tonight take it even if it be a stake that you're tied to with wood kindled at your feet let it be that he is with you even there even then that's a reality for many who have gone before us and he's still a martyr today friends it's real and Deuteronomy 8 verse 2 it says as the Lord speaks to the children of Israel he says that the

Lord thy God have led thee these 40 years in the wilderness to humble thee and to prove thee to know what was in thine heart it's interesting isn't it three things there God has led us to humble us we all need that we all need to be humbled to prove us to try to test us and thirdly to know what was in our heart and by his grace ideally and prayerfully it will be faith that stands that test of proving it will be faith that will be found in our heart as we trust him an old time preacher said unshakable faith comes from having your faith shaken it's when the faith is shaken that unshakable faith will stand it will shine through it will stand the test the storms of life and trials are those tests of character that can happen as we see right through the word we see it's warts and all isn't it about the men and women of God we see their faults and failings just as starkly as the good things they've done and God's honest about the record of the men and women they weren't perfect examples and yet there's a testing of character and we see them shine in those times and as the Lord tests the state of our hearts it's through that faith that endures the faith that will endure through the fiery trial and the testing of your faith that's producing endurance it's patience it will be as gold it will shine through friends

I want to exhort and encourage you today this is something you can apply this is not some theoretical thing we're not talking about some theory here tonight we're talking about where the rubber hits the road it's where you're going to be Monday morning it's when the trial of your faith happens it could be tonight the trial of your faith when situations happen when you're tested in family with friends in the day by day of life the fiery trial the faith that endures is the real thing it's I know in healthcare they use the term gold standard it's the best you can get gold standard faith it's faith that is as gold faith that will shine through and that's the kind of faith we want isn't it faith that will shine faith that will glow faith that will be vibrant and alive and living and flourishing and shining through even in the midst of a fiery trial and so it's when we stand firm in those times of trial that we can know God's grace and help it says in

[18:19] Matthew 10 verse 22 it says and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake but he that endureth to the end shall be saved interesting verse isn't that you're going to be hated by all men for my name's sake is that true for us is that true for the church by and large today or are we kind of all pretty cozy and comfortable with the world maybe we're too popular maybe we've toned it down we've jazzed it up so much that there's scarcely any message left to it but the Bible says the Lord Jesus says to his people ye shall you God's people you're going to be hated by all men for my name's sake now we get some hate mail believe it or not I can't believe I can't understand why to be honest but we get some hate calls it's been an almost weekly occurrence from time to time people that hate our guts and it makes me feel glad in a way because we must be doing something right

I hope so anyway I trust so I pray so that we're doing something right because we should be hated of all men for his name's sake and so there should be a degree of people hating the message of the gospel because it's convicting it's confronting it's uncomfortable isn't it as we think of when we hear preaching about repentance we hear preaching about sin we hear preaching about getting right with God stopping playing games stopping playing church and starting to really commit to Christ and these are days we need to get serious people tonight in 2 Timothy 2 12 it says if we suffer we shall also reign with him if we deny him he will also deny us it's an interesting verse isn't it if we suffer we shall also reign with him you know I think of these men and women at the state being

burnt as their flesh bubbles and boils and catches a flame as they gruesomely grotesquely die if you suffer with him you're going to reign with him

I wonder if those kind of verses might have been in their thoughts when they went through such awful trauma and torture I wonder if those kind of scriptures might have jumped out at them in their subconscious in their meditation in their heart that such scriptures might have come to their attention and the real power of faith is seen when the flames come it's when the flames come and we know in Australia we're not likely to face anything remotely like such a thing I know I've seen some horrific things I know I've seen some horrific things of what does go on you know it's very easy to access it now on the internet for example actual decapitations and awful things of people being tortured burnt to death you can watch it on YouTube or whatever you know you can see such ghastly things it's in your face today we can see it it's real it's 21st century it's our brothers and sisters in

Christ this is the gruesome fat people tonight and what do you have what do we have to suffer let's face it honestly God help us to be more faithful to entrust what we are and have to him and Isaiah 40 verse 29 it says he giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increases strength let's be those who will be realising with faint we've got no might that he might give power to the faint and that he might increase strength friends just think of many accounts we could give of persecution I'll just touch on some just real brief there was a preacher he was 16 at the time heading off as a Christian on a ship in the high seas with a crew of 12 this man is about 16 and before he left the shore he promised his mother that he would meet with her so to speak three times a day at the throne of grace he agreed to pray three times a day at the time his mother would have been praying and he thought that he must pray aloud as he went down below deck and prayed and the crew threw wood at him they poured buckets of water on him they could not put out the fire that was in his soul they tied him to the mast they laid 39 stripes on his back still he prayed they tied a rope around his body and threw him overboard and he swam as best he could when he took hold of the side of the ship they pushed him off with a pole and at last his strength gave way and supposing they were meant to kill him he prayed that God would forgive them and he called out send my mother send my body to my mother and tell her that

I died for Jesus he was then pulled on deck unconscious and after some time came to conviction began to seize the sailors before night two of them were gloriously converted and inside of a week everyone on board including the captain was blessedly saved the trial of your faith is going to come forth as gold and I know even in our city there's Christians standing up for Christ some of them are really radical people and they're getting persecuted even in our city of Adelaide today because they're standing up for the gospel and I thank God that they are willing to open their mouths with the gospel we know that the time is limited when such opportunities may present and we know that persecution will rise up because the world doesn't want to hear the message the world doesn't want to hear the message that you must repent or you will likewise perish they want some cozy comfortable kind of easy breezy you know three steps to financial security and heaven thrown in too you know that's the kind of gospel that we're getting fed today we've got to get back to the truth here's another story some years ago in

[24 : 37] Japan sorry when Japan was taking over Korea they were bitterly persecuting Christians at that time carrying them off to Japanese jails believers who were not arrested felt that by this very fan that they noticed this and there's one church where one of the people in the church said there must be something wrong with our church because there's 37 people from that other church in jail but there's only one of ours in the jail so they were getting worried obviously something was wrong something was wrong because they weren't in jail he said I fear the Lord does not count as worthy to suffer persecution interesting isn't it there's many stories we could tell there's another one here in Vietnam there was a communist police officer he earned an infamous name for himself by bashing up Christians and arresting them and as far as he was concerned these law breakers deserve to be punished as they conducted their illegal religious activities and this man his name was

Tong God had other plans for Tong Tong despite his animosity towards the local Christians several believers began to persistently pray for him they prayed for this police official some even dared to share the gospel with him and gradually as they continued to win his trust and friendship Tong's heart began to soften finally he came to the point he could no longer reject the truth of the gospel and Tong became a Christian like the apostle Paul the policeman had become one of the very people he'd previously persecuted and Tong's outlook on life was transformed many of the

believers could not believe that this was the same man who had been filled with so much hatred towards them and it went on he became a leader himself God used him too and you know I've heard stories even of late I know I've heard it said that some of these ones who are persecuting the Christians in the city of Adelaide as a couple of them got saved they've actually turned from being the ones cursing and harassing the Christians to actually joining to actually trusting Christ and one bowing and weeping as she did so as she trusted Christ that's real that's real isn't it the trial of your faith is going to come forth as gold an old time preacher Vanes Havner said this a persecuted church has a repelling power as well as an attracting power the great awakenings of the past have not been begun by the gathering in of the many but by the deeper consecration of the few and another quote whenever you see persecution there is more than a probability the truth is on the persecuted side and to close Dwight Moody said this happiness is caused by things that happen around me and circumstances will mar it but joy flows right on through trouble joy flows on through the dark joy flows on in the night as well as in the day joy flows all through persecution and opposition it's an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart a secret spring the world can't see and doesn't know anything about the Lord gives his people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to him 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 that's our prayer tonight I trust that's our prayer let us commit to that Lord we thank you that we can stand in this nation as people largely unaffected by suffering and yet Lord you cause to that place from time to time help us Lord when we face those dark valleys help us see where we walk that you are with us still and even if it be Lord that for some of us even inconceivable though it may seem at this time that some of us may be tortured for Christ that we might be tortured for the gospel for your sake Lord help us to hold fast help us Lord to have that kind of faith that gold standard kind of faith that quality kind of faith that real kind of faith that comes from you that comes from your hand and that is enabled by your spirit in lives and hearts Lord we pray help us to be those faithful ones so that we might be in the number of those who have gone before us we thank you

Lord for the testimony of men and women of faith that have gone through some through death itself to your presence Lord we thank you for their testimony today help us Lord to consider and take stock tonight of where we are individually Lord that each of us can consider how it is that our faith can shine even through those times of trial Lord for people tonight that might be going through times of trial in terms of their health in terms of family harassment or persecution it could be people misunderstanding at work and even hateful people Lord we pray that you would give everyone that resolute heart that steadfast faith that they can stand strong and see you do a work even in the midst of that trial Lord we thank you in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen.