Test My Faith? Why?

We are exhorted to test our faith in God for a very good reason; for it determines how you live on earth and where you will spend eternity. As I said in the previous article titled “Where Does Our Faith Come From?”….faith is my responsibility to grow up from the mustard seed faith that we’ve each been given from God at the start of our life. We grow our faith into our most holy faith - by first hearing and believing the message of the saving power of Jesus Christ and then by walking with the Lord in love and obedience day by day to the end of our faith. Faith ends the moment we see the reward of our faith: Jesus Christ and hopefully with His joyful ‘welcome’ into His Kingdom.

So then, is it any wonder why we are repeatedly told to test our faith, judge our own heart, die to our fleshly desires, get rid of our idols, and to quickly come out of every wicked lifestyle and system that depends on man instead of the Lord? If we are called to His eternal Kingdom; called to live accordingly and to influence as many people as we can, then what are we waiting for? Why do I hold on so tightly to the things of this world (attitudes and lifestyles) that won’t be in His Kingdom, not even mentioned or remembered? Yes, we live in this world as it is, as cursed and deteriorating as it is, but as one that is “in Christ Jesus” I do not belong to the world. Jesus said to His disciple Thomas, that blessed are those who have not seen Jesus Christ in person, yet have believed in Him. (John 20:29)

So…..

*“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?”* 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

How do we test faith?

**\*I see things differently:** *“I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.”* What things? We each have different and similar lists. But, the truth is the same; that the worldly things we deemed so important – are not as valuable to us anymore as knowing Christ and His Kingdom.

*“Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!”* (Philippians 3:7-11 NLT)

**\*I am motivated differently**: *“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”* Romans 5:5

*“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”* 1 John 4:16-20

**\*I am more aware of my inner thoughts and secret desires:** *“Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.”* Psalms 26:2-3

**\*I am able to test faith in others** (not to condemn but to pray for them): *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”* John 15:18-20 *“If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”*  John 15:21

**\*I will be eager to testify about Jesus Christ and what He’s done for me:**

Jesus says to all His disciples: *“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.* ***And you also must testify****.”* John 15:26-27

We are compelled by the Holy Spirit to testify about our love of Christ Jesus, and not because of an order to do so. The Lord’s indwelling Spirit compels us because He is compelled by what He personally knows and longs to see come; the reality of Christ’s Kingdom.

*“This is the one who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.* ***And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*** 1 John 5:6-12

Are you afraid to testify to others about Jesus Christ and what He’s done for you personally? Jesus gives His Spirit to those who have received Him by faith so that they can boldly testify to others that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

The Scriptures teach: *“You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and* ***no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.****”* 1 Corinthians 12:2-3

**\*You stand on God’s Word in the face of persecution.** When you testify of Jesus Christ persecution will not stop you from walking with the Lord wherever He wants to go, saying whatever His Spirit wants you to say.

In another passage it states that He has enabled us to serve Him in holiness and righteousness, and that without fear all our days. (Luke 1:68-79) Love and fear cannot live together in the same body. Love is more powerful than fear, but how many will test Christ’s love - that far? We stop short when we let fear in to control our thoughts, emotions, choices and actions. We stop walking with the Lord, veering off from His course with us when we allow what’s happening around us to take our fix off Jesus and what He longs to do with us, even in the midst of chaos and disaster. Fear in us makes us long for Jesus to come get us and take us out of this world so that we don’t have to suffer persecution, but Jesus longs to take us through the persecution, the fire, the storm, the loss, the hostility, the imprisonment, etc….and do wonderful things, impossible things, miraculous things, mind-blowing things! Jesus was an escape artist! No one could do anything to Him without His Father’s permission. Whatever happens to us is for our good and the good of others. We can entrust ourselves, our children and our future to God. For His plan is not to harm us, but to give us hope that will not disappoint us, and a future with Him in GLORY!

My greatest fear (valid or not) is that my grandchildren will not know enough to see them through the tribulation of their time. We have taught our children the truth about Jesus Christ and we have seen the evidence that they each have believed in their Savior, but we see more on the horizon that our grandchildren will face than our children had to face, or that we had to face. My fear is overturned when I remind myself of God’s promise to godly parents and re-read how Jesus prayed for His faithful ones:

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those (our children and grandchildren) who will believe in me through their message.”* John 17:20 (words in parenthesis are mine, and true)

 *“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”* John 17:14-16

*“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known (by filling us with His Holy Spirit) in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”* John 17:24-26 (words in parenthesis are mine, and true)

Now think about that. Jesus Christ prays for us and for our children and grandchildren. By our own prayers our children are sanctified (protected and provided for) while we wait for them to give themselves wholly to Jesus Christ. But Jesus prays them (and us) according to the future of what is yet to come; the *beginning of the end*.

*“In the beginning you, Oh God, laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you.”* Psalms 102:25-28

Our children may not remember the hardships we parents went through as they were growing up. Our grandchildren weren’t even born during our trials of testing, but they must all learn about it and this is why we are instructed to:

*“Let it be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord.”* Psalms 102:18

Always take to heart and publicly acknowledge that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below; that there is no other! Keep His order and obey His instructions that it may go well with you and your children after you. Impress upon your children what the Lord has done for you. Talk to them about it when you sit at home. Walk with your children and play with your children, and when you do – let them hear your heart tell them what the Lord means to you. When you lie them down at night and when you get them up in the morning – let them hear you acknowledge the Lord and praise the Lord who sustains you all. When you eat together and work together – let them hear what the Lord has planned for the faithful. Do you know? You should!

Write it all down and put it up on your walls and on your mantles, counters and sills, so that the next generation and the next after - will believe in Him. What will you show them, teach them and hold them accountable for, if it can’t last or be rewarded by God? Your children MUST be inspired by YOU to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength; the same Holy God of Noah that he passed down to his children, and of Abraham who passed it down to Isaac, and of Moses that passed it on to the Hebrew slaves, and of David who passed it on to Solomon, and of Elijah who passed it on to Elisha, and of Peter and John who passed it on to the first Church, and of the two witnesses yet to come. This is the line they better be in; that of Christ and His Kingdom; the pure family line of our heavenly Father; the only line that will not die out, but rather live the eternal life of God – generation after generation after generation – with no end to all the generations to come.

We can’t take anything else with us except those who have believed in Christ by our message and our example of faithfulness. This is the joy that our Lord kept before Him on the way to the cross and while He hung there suffering in our place! True and Faithful is His label; what is yours? What will your children and grandchildren say of you when you’re gone? What will they remember most? Will it be your faith or your compromise? Saint or hypocrite?

Now ask yourself, if there’s anything more important than keeping yourself hot and ready for the Lord? Is there anything else that matters more than making sure your children and grandchildren are secure in Christ? Don’t think that you can trust them and their future to God while you live half-heartedly for the Lord as if it won’t affect them! Don’t do it! They will do the same, and God will hold you accountable for what happens to them. So….

*“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?”* 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

Thank You Father God! Thank You that You are faithful to test our faith; to put our faith on trial so that we will see if we truly believe in You, or not. Thank You for not holding our weakness against us; for even though our strength is little – You show how strong You are to deliver us from evil. You are our perfect precious Father and You have given us Your Word, Your Son and Your Spirit – to secure us and bless us and remind us of what is yet to come that we can rejoice over no matter what happens!

Yes, I will test my faith with each trouble, problem, hardship, loss and worldly failure because I know that You love me and that You hear my prayers. Whatever trouble or trial that comes – it has all worked for my good; that Christ have His way in me and that I am ready for Him; ready to serve Him without fear and ready to see Him face to face; even longing for that moment, not afraid to suffer and die. This is how I will know that Jesus Christ truly lives in me. This is my confidence in the same resurrection power.

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”* Romans 5:1-5