

“Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

To inwardly apply the cross, we need to coordinate our spirit with our environment. In these verses we have both *the inward cross* and *the outward cross*. “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus” speaks of the inward cross. Then this inward cross is coordinated with the outward cross by the word “for”: “For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” The inward cross and the outward cross operating together is the “death working in us” that produces “life in you” (v. 12).

In verse 11 we are handed over, or delivered, unto death. We may be handed over into weakness, into a trial, into insults, into misunderstanding – into being crossed out. We are handed over again and again to all kinds of outward environments. Just as the Lord Jesus was handed over to the smiters, to those who rejected Him, to all the environment that was sovereignly laid out for Him, we also are always being handed over. So do not be surprised. This is our lot because we have a destiny and a goal – to follow the pathway of the cross, to enjoy resurrection life, and to be conformed to His image.

We are always being handed over to death “for Jesus’s sake.” In Greek, the preposition used here can be literally translated *because of*. Thus, it would read, “For we who live are always delivered unto death because of Jesus.” He is the cause of all this! He is in our spirit, and God’s desire is to push Him out into our soul – to manifest Him, to display Him, to make Him known. Jesus is not happy being confined to our spirit. He wants to spread out into our whole being. And because many times we do not take the initiative to pursue Him, we get handed over to a death situation – to a trying environment or to a disappointment. We are just handed over. This is because God is so desirous that Jesus be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Supplied Life by Bill Freeman (October 3)

THE TESTING OF FAITH

That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire (1Peter 1.7a)

We will now turn to the testing of faith. The Scriptures show us that there is not a time when faith will not be tested. All faith must be proven. The reasons for the testing of faith are as follows:

1. *That We May Grow*. God tests our faith in order that we may grow. No Christian can advance without his faith being tested. Christians all over the world have their faith challenged. I have no reservation in making such a statement, because the only way for faith to grow is to have it proven. In leading us into growth, God uses the only method available. He allows our faith to go through testing. We come to God and accept His grace through faith. And hence, when our faith is tested, we just naturally grow.

2. *That God’s Heart May be Satisfied*. God puts our faith to the test not only to cause us to grow but also to satisfy His own heart. No one in the world is exempt from having his faith tried after he has believed in the Lord and received God’s grace. The reason for such testing is to prove that your faith is real. The realness of

your faith in turn satisfies God's heart. Such tested faith glorifies His name. Through whatever tribulation or persecution or opposition or darkness you are being tested, if you believe without faltering, then that faith of yours gives glory to God's name.

3. *That the Mouth of Satan May Be Stopped.* God causes our faith to go through testing not only to make us grow and to enable us to satisfy His heart, but also to stop Satan's mouth. God's enemy is deadly opposed to our saying that we have believed. He tries to hinder us from claiming that we have received in faith. He always throws doubts and troubles at us. But by testing our faith, God shuts up the mouth of Satan. For the latter discovers that we are no easy prey, and he will thus retreat. If possible, he will always attempt to hinder us from living peacefully and having the blessings of God. He will not give up till he himself is shut up. In order to shut the mouth of Satan, God must try our faith.

4. *That We May Help Other People.* Another reason why God tests our faith is to equip us for helping other people. One whose faith has not been tested is unable to help others. People can only receive help from the one whose faith has been proven. One's faith is undependable if he professes to have believed and yet his faith has not been tried. But a truly tested faith renders Satan helpless; and such faith helps the whole church.

Unquestionably, a faith that has been tested and proven is more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:7).

The Relationship between Faith Tested and Victory

The reason for the testing of our faith is to show us what faith really is. Genuine faith is long-lived. Whatever is short-lived is not faith. Genuine faith is that which can believe after days or months or years. It is able to endure obstacles once and many times over. It will continue to believe after being tested to the seventh time. A so-called short-lived faith that is terminated after one encounter with difficulty is no faith at all.

The Scriptures show us that victory comes through believing the word of God. God has said that His Son is our life, our head, our victory, our sanctification, our power. And we know that He bears all our burdens, takes care of all our responsibilities, supplies us with patience and gentleness, and supports us from within. Thank and praise the Lord! We believe and we know. Such faith nonetheless will have to be tested.

This morning, one brother said to me, "I have let go, I have believed, I have crossed the threshold of victory. But yesterday after the meeting while I was returning home on my bicycle, I was hit by an elderly man and fell from the bicycle. At that time, though I did not say anything outwardly, inwardly my temper had already risen. What about this? I have let go, confessed my inability, believed that Christ is my victory, but my temper heated up even though I was not thinking of losing my temper. What is this?" Quite simply, this is due to two factors:

1. *Our Victory Does Not Mean We Have Changed.* Having crossed the threshold of victory, we may think we have changed and improved when afterwards we did not sin for a few weeks. We begin to be elated, even to boast of our achievement. Whereupon God decides to test us, allowing us to fail so as to make us realize that we have not changed one iota for the better. The reason for our newly-found patience is not because we have changed, but because Christ is patient for us. If we consider ourselves changed, we will undoubtedly fall. We ought to know that we can be patient only because Christ is our patience, we can only be gentle because Christ is our gentleness, we can only be holy because He is our holiness. Even after we have overcome for many days,

we remain the same, we are forever ourselves, and we have not changed one whit. Watchman Nee is forever Watchman Nee. After fifty years, he will still be Watchman Nee. Take away grace, and Watchman Nee remains Watchman Nee. I thank and praise the Lord! Victory is Christ; it has nothing to do with me. I am still able to sin; I have not changed at all.

In Chefoo some missionaries asked me what change was, and what exchange was. I replied: “Paul plus Peter plus John minus grace is equal to sinners. This is not only true of Paul, Peter and John; it is true with us ‘common’ people as well. Apart from the grace of God, we are no different from the robbers and prostitutes. If there is grace present, then it is Christ substituting for us and not because we have changed.” How true is the word in a hymn, “Whene’er my heart is lifted up, how very near I am to fall” (R. H. Earnshaw). Let us ever keep in mind that you and I are still the same; we have not changed at all.

2. *Which Is Trustworthy—the Word of God or Our Experience?* How easily we believe and trust in our experience. We reckon that people so weak and defeated and ill-tempered as we are are in no position for victory. This is because we look at our own experience and consider God’s word to be false. But let me ask you, which is trustworthy—the word of God or your own experience?

In Chefoo, a sister came to see me. She confessed that she had yielded and fully believed Christ as her victory, yet her victory was rather short-lived; it lasted but one week. A week later, two of her children quarreled with each other, and she could endure no longer. During the last three days she told me she had had no victory at all. “What is wrong?” she asked. I inquired of her if Christ had changed. She replied, no. Then had the word of God changed? I asked. Again she answered, no. Since neither Christ nor God’s word had changed, how could she say she had had no victory? Her reply: because she could endure no more.

So at this point I used a parable: Suppose your son meets a man on the street who says to him, “Young man, you are not born of your mother. Rather, your mother bought you at the drugstore for twenty cents.” Suppose your son then runs home and asks you, “Mother, am I born by you or was I bought by you at the drugstore for twenty cents? I ask you this because a stranger I met on the street just now told me I was bought.” You say to your son, “Son, you are born of me. Do not believe what the stranger said.”

He leaves you and meets another person who tells him the same thing, with the additional word that he was an eyewitness at the scene of the purchase. Again, your son comes home to ask you about this new word. So you say to your son, “What! You still do not believe *my* word?” Once more your boy goes out and meets the same man who asks him if he has asked his mother once again about it. And then the man adds that on the day of the transaction at the drugstore, not only *he* had been there, but about twenty *other* persons could serve as witnesses too!

At this point I said to the sister in Chefoo that on the one hand was the mother’s word, and the mother’s word needed no witness; on the other hand was the word of the stranger, and he had many false witnesses. I then asked the sister, “Who would the son believe—the mother’s word that needed no proof, or the stranger’s word that was full of false evidence? Were your son to come back and still ask you whether he was born by you or bought by you, you would most certainly say to him, “You, little child, are really a fool!”

“Likewise, sister, today, God will say to you that you are a foolish child! For He has made His Son your holiness, life and victory. God said, and it was done. Moreover, He has said it again and again in His word. But you grow anxious and say: ‘Something is wrong, because I have proofs that I have not overcome. Although God has said that His Son is my holiness, I say I am proven to have no holiness.’

“Let me ask you, what is the difference between your behavior here and that of the son in the parable? You have believed in Satan’s lie which is full of false evidence, and you do not declare the word of God. Were some man to actually come to your son to deceive him, I tell you without reservation that your son would smilingly respond that his mother’s word was most trustworthy and the stranger was a liar. And thus would your son put the enemy to shame but would glorify his mother.

“Let me tell you here and now that if Satan comes to make you feel cold, weak and defeated, you should say, ‘I am victorious, for Christ is my victory.’ If he comes to make you feel hasty, you still should say, ‘I am victorious, because Christ is my victory.’ By so doing you declare that what Satan does and says is a lie, because only the word of God is true. This is faith, and such tested faith is the kind which glorifies God’s name.

“If you confess with your mouth that you believe, and yet the moment you are tempted you return home crying, where is your faith? Such faith is short-lived, for genuine faith must go successfully through testing. You are finished if as soon as you encounter temptation you concede you do not have victory.”

When you are faced with temptation, you will stand victoriously if you declare that God’s word—the word of Jehovah of hosts—is trustworthy and dependable. Whatever God says is yea and amen, and His word is set in heaven forever. The question now is, whose word will you believe?

Where Faith Is, the Mountain Is Removed

To another sister who had a similar problem I said that we must have faith that removes the mountain (see Matthew 17:20, 21:21; Mark 11:23; 1 Corinthians 13:2). Whatever succumbs to temptation is not faith. What is meant by the faith which removes the mountain? A faith that is firm and unyielding is called the faith which removes a mountain. Such faith is not blocked by any obstacle. Where such belief is, difficulty is moved away. Mountain and faith do not co-exist. Either the mountain is removed or the faith is removed. Each testing is for the sake of removing the mountain. Therefore, the question now is not in relation to the matter of testing, but rather in relation to what is removed – the mountain or faith? whether we believe in the word of the stranger or in the word of God? That which fails the testing is not genuine faith.

One brother professed he had crossed the threshold of victory and yet he did not see victory. Satan insinuated that he was cheated, for there was no such thing as victory. Well, if you say you are cheated, you are finished, because God will do to you according to what you believe.

I recall how on one occasion I was sick in my room upstairs in this very building where I am now. A brother took my temperature and pulse. The temperature was feverish, and the pulse beat fast. For several nights I had no sleep. I was near the gate of death. During that particular night I prayed, and the next morning I had the word of the Lord that He had heard my prayer. He gave me Romans 8:11: “if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” I thought I would surely sleep well that night, not knowing that it was actually going to be even worse that night.

The next day this same brother came to take my temperature and pulse again. My fever rose higher and my pulse beat faster. Satan was most diligent. He instantly hinted to me as to what kind of promise really *was* it? For I had been promised by God to be quickened and revived and yet I did not look as though I were going to live. Satan’s mocking word seemed reasonable. Yet just at that moment, God immediately gave me two more Scripture verses: One was in Jonah 2:8—“They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” This was

the word spoken by Jonah when in the fish's belly. My outward circumstances were all lying vanities. Another verse was John 17:17b—"Thy word is truth." God says that His word is truth; all other words are falsehoods.

If God's word is truth, then my feverish temperature, my runaway pulse, and even my sleepless night were all falsehoods. I therefore thanked God at once, declaring that the word in Romans 8:11 was still true while all my symptoms were false. Thus I believed, and thus I declared. In the afternoon my fever receded and my pulse slowed down. I also was able to sleep that night. This is the testing of faith, and this is the removal of the mountain.

Genuine Faith Believes in God's Word Alone

What is genuine faith? Genuine faith believes in the word of God exclusively, it is not believing in one's own experience, feeling, or dark environment. If environment and experience coincide with God's word, we praise and thank the Lord. But if these disagree with His word, then the word of God alone stands true. Whatever is contrary to God's word is false. Satan may insinuate to you, saying: How can you say you have victory? Where is your victory since you are as corrupt and weak as you were before? But you can counter him with this: "Indeed, I am still I, I will never change, but God says Christ is my holiness, my life and my victory." Though Satan suggests that you are still corrupt and weak, God's word remains true. Whatever the enemy whispers to you is false; only the word of the Lord is true!

In Chefoo, I learned a lesson. One day, Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher and I were praying especially for gifts. I asked for the gift of faith, and she asked for the gift of healing. We prayed for only about fifteen minutes, believing we had received the gifts. In the evening we went to the meeting. Sister Hu told us that the sister who lived in the room below the meeting hall was mentally deranged. Previously, she had turned schizophrenic once or twice a month, but recently she had often shown signs of mental derangement. The meeting ended at ten thirty. As I returned home, I was thinking what should be done for the person who lived in the room below the meeting hall and was mentally sick. After I parted company with a brother, the word of God immediately came to me: "the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire" (1 Peter 1:7). I said to myself, "Fine, faith was now to be tested."

So the following day I went to find sister Fischbacher. I could have dealt with the case alone, but because yesterday she had received the gift of healing and I had received the gift of faith, we should now put them to use. When sister Fischbacher heard that I had invited her to go with me, she was slightly taken aback. She said she would pray about it. After praying, she decided to go with me. When we arrived, the patient had just fallen asleep. So the physician, Dr. Shih, suggested that we wait till she woke up, but added that humanly speaking this was a hopeless case. Now it so happened that sister Fischbacher had to be on board a boat that left at 11:30. We waited till 10:50 before we were asked to go in.

I spoke a few words to the patient. I noticed that her hair began to stand up, which indicated she was going to become mad. But praise and thank God, I prayed for a minute or two, and the Lord gave me faith. As faith arose within me, I commenced to praise God. At that moment I knew she would get well. Sister Fischbacher also prayed a few words, and she too had faith. So she also praised God. Two brothers and one sister who

accompanied us also prayed, but they evidently were not in the flow of the Holy Spirit. The time was up for sister Fischbacher to depart, so we left to see her off.

When I came back from the pier to see the patient, she was crying and laughing and “raising hell.” After a while, she fainted. None knew what to do. At that very moment, I came to know what was meant by faith being tested. Dr. Shih took me out of the room and suggested that I pray immediately, for he as a doctor could not do anything. I said there was no need to pray. I smilingly challenged Satan to try his best. The patient was mad and I looked mad too. She was “raising hell” *inside* the room, and I was storming hell *outside* the room. She *raged* for three and a half hours, while I *smiled* for three and a half hours. During that period, my faith really rose up. There would be a meeting at 4:00 o’clock which I had to attend. As I left, I told Dr. Shih: “Do not be anxious, nor think of doing anything. Let Satan exhaust his power. What God says, that is so. For the Lord never plays a trick on us.”

In the evening, Dr. Shih told me the patient was getting better. The next morning, Dr. Shih told me she was almost normal. I knew, however, she would rant and rave again because the faith of a few other brethren would now have to be tested.

In the afternoon, she did indeed rant and rave again. Dr. Shih came and asked me what should be done. I knelt to pray, but no word came, and faith seemed not to rise. At that moment, Satan was extremely busy. Mockingly, the enemy hinted, “Why not smile again? You smiled yesterday; why not smile today?” It seemed I had lost my faith. But thank and praise God, there was a voice within me saying, “Your feeling did change today from yesterday, for you could smile yesterday but today you feel frigid. However, I *the Lord* have not changed.” I said to myself, “Indeed, the Lord has *not* changed.” At once I broke out in praise: “Lord, You have *not* changed.” Yesterday I believed in God’s word; yet my smile on that day could not make God any the *more* trustworthy. Today my feeling was cold, yet neither could it cause God’s faithfulness to be any the *less* trustworthy. I therefore thanked the Lord and prayed no more.

In the evening, Dr. Shih reported to me that according to medical diagnosis the patient could be declared fully well. On the next day, even her facial color had changed for the better. Hallelujah, the word of God *is* trustworthy. This was the testing of faith.

Oh! How we expect to see a result as soon as we believe! We want to experience victory the very moment we believe. But let me ask you if you can believe God for three hours, three days, even three months. If you cannot believe Him for three hours, three days or three months, where is your faith? “He that believeth shall not be in haste” (Isaiah 28:16b).

One evening the Lord commanded His disciples to cross the Lake of Galilee to the other side. Suddenly there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat upon the boat so much that it was now filling up. The Lord Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. The disciples awakened Him and said, “Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?” The Lord arose and rebuked the wind. But what did He say to His disciples immediately afterwards? In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus is recorded as saying: “have ye not yet faith?” (4:40) In the Gospel according to Matthew the record reads: “O ye of little faith” (8:26). This indicates that many hasty prayers are but an expression of unbelief. If there were faith, you would stand firm. The Lord orders you to cross to the other side; He has not commanded you to go to the bottom of the lake. Because He has given His order—and no matter how strong the wind blows or how high the waves beat—the boat *cannot* capsize. People with little or no faith hide themselves as soon as they are faced with obstacles. With *genuine* faith, you can meet the test headlong and stand. Little faith hides at testing, whereas big faith stands against the testing. False faith falls in trial, but genuine faith stands throughout all the trial.

Stand on the Side of Faith

On one occasion a person began to scold me severely. The more I endured, the more he scolded. I asked God at that time, “O God, please quickly give me patience and strength so that I may be able to endure; otherwise, I will hastily lose my temper.” If this were to happen again today, not only am I unafraid but I can also smilingly say, “Satan, you may use that person to berate me even more strongly. Yet see if you can upset the Christ in me.” I will not hate the person who reviles me; I can even love him. And if this is so, what can the enemy possibly do? Praise and thank God, victory is Christ, not I. Were it I, I could only endure so much, and then I would explode. But if it be Christ, no temptation will be too much for Him, nor any testing too difficult for Him. Stand on the side of God’s word, stand on the side of faith—and Satan is rendered helpless. Since the Lord orders us to go to the other side, to the other side we will go. Not because *our* word counts, but because God’s word is trustworthy, for He is forever faithful.

In conclusion, let me ask you if you are frightened by one or two old sins? I suppose you must have a problem like that. But I will further ask you: when the Christ who dwells in you allows you to be tested, who is the one really being tested? Permit me to say to you that each time a trial of faith comes your way, do understand that it is not you being proven, it is the Lord. When your faith is being proven, it is the Son of God being proven; it is God’s faithfulness and not you that is being tested. For whatever trial descends upon you, it is to test what Christ can do. Each trial tests the faithfulness of God. By standing on the side of God and His word, by standing on the side against feeling and environment, you have faith—and this can truly be called victory. Satan says you are still unclean, but you can say Christ is my holiness. Satan says you are yet proud, but you can say Christ is my humility. Satan says you are still defeated, but you can say Christ is my victory. No matter what the enemy says, your response is and always shall be that Christ is trustworthy and God’s word is dependable. This is faith; this substantiates the truthfulness of God’s word. Hallelujah, Christ overcomes, God is still faithful, and His word remains altogether trustworthy!

Remember that the trying of faith will not be long. During the period when you first cross the threshold of victory, you will be especially tested. However, once having your faith tested, you will be able to help and benefit other people. God’s heart will be satisfied, and his name will be glorified. Satan’s mouth will be sealed, and he can do nothing to you. Praise the Lord, the word of God is trustworthy! Thank God, that when you stand before Him, nothing can stand before you. When you stand in faith, there is no mountain that cannot be removed, because faith is for the sake of removing mountains. If there be a mountain in your path, it shall be removed indeed.

The Life That Wins by Watchman Nee