

The Refiner's Fire



Job said "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10^{note}) Gold is tested by fire. Saints are tested by adversity! None of God's children enjoy the Refiner's Fire, but all of us experience it to one degree or another, at one time or another. It may or may not always be a physical trial, but it is always a spiritual trial! And we often find ourselves with a gamut of emotions (anger, fear, despair, frustration, etc) and questions like "Why me?," "Why now?," etc. But as someone has said God takes us into His "darkroom" to develop our character (Ro 5:3-4^{note}). And so when you are in the darkness, hold on to what God has shown you in the light. As Corrie Ten Boom puts it "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away your ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." We need to remember that the darker the night, the brighter the stars. The hotter the fire, the purer the gold. Even as a gem cannot be polished without friction, neither can a saint be perfected without trials. The more a tree of righteousness is shaken by the wind, the deeper he or she becomes rooted in Christ Jesus. In the final analysis, affliction is the saint's school of faith and trial is the school of trust. In light of the fact that faith-testing times can be faith-strengthening times, our great Teacher writes many a bright lesson on the blackboard of affliction, for some of life's greatest lessons are learned in the school of affliction! "All God's testings have a purpose, Someday you will see the light. All He asks is that you trust Him, Walk by faith and not by sight. (Zoller)

A dark hour makes Jesus bright.

--Robert Murray M'Cheyne

C H Spurgeon, who experienced many physical and spiritual trials, said that there is no education like adversity, testifying "I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. Stars may be seen from the bottom of a deep well, when they cannot be discerned from the top of a mountain. So are many things learned in adversity which the prosperous man dreams not of. Troubles, like files, take away our rust; like furnaces, they consume our dross; like winnowing-fans they drive away the chaff, and we would have but little usefulness, if we had not been made to pass through the furnace. And in all our troubles we have found the character of God a comfort, for the Refiner is never very far from the mouth of the furnace when His gold is in the fire." While God never promised we would miss the storms, He has promised we will make the harbor! As Warren Wiersbe poignantly phrased it...

**"When God puts His own people into the furnace,
He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.
He knows how long and how much."**

He is not an arsonist, but a Refiner! "Though times be dark, the struggles grim, And cares rise like a flood, This sweet assurance holds to Him: My God is near and good." (Hager)

Gold is tested by fire

Man is tested by adversity

At age 68 (I am now 77 and still) I am experiencing the most severe trial of my life (and faith) as my wife of 45 (50) years is suffering from a strange mental illness (not overt Alzheimer's) which is causing her to progressively withdraw from daily interactions with family and friends and spend almost all her waking time before the television watching the same shows over and over (you can do that today with streaming media). And so as I was reading Spurgeon's sermon on Job 23:10^{note} ("Whither Goest Thou?"), I was moved to share excerpts with you beloved, as I know many of you are undergoing trials which don't seem to be either momentary or

light! My prayer is that God's Spirit will use these truths to fortify you in the fire you are experiencing so that when you come forth like pure gold, you might bring great glory to the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. Amen

"The refiner is never very far from the mouth of the furnace
when his gold is in the fire."
-- C H Spurgeon

Spurgeon's Sermon - "TRIALS are no evidence of being without God, since TRIALS come from God. Job says, "When He has tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, He had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us. No trouble comes to us without divine permission. All the "dogs of affliction" are muzzled until God sets them free. Nay, against none of the seed of Abraham can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow randomly, but they grow orderly as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares the number ten they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God's way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests: "When he hath tried me." The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say: "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." [Job 1:10-11]. The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of Him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods, that we are not mercenary followers, but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). By the endurance of grief our sincerity is made manifest, and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders, but true heirs of God. (Ro 8:17-note)

If you have met with TROUBLES, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, "WHEN He has tried me." As much as to say, He will not always be doing it. There will come a time when He will have done trying me (1Pe 1:6-note, 1Pe 5:10-note). Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm, and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep. There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms (Rev 4:6-note). Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him, and so will it be with you. You young believers, you that are bound for the kingdom, but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts (Phil 1:29-note, 2Ti 3:12-note). If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised (1Pe 4:12-note). Let your trials be evidence to you rather that you are in the right, than that you are in the wrong way; "for what son is there whom his father does not chasten?" (Heb 12:7-8-note) He that will go to hell will find many to help him thither; but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries (Acts 14:22). Pluck up courage (Jn 16:33). The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If thou were not God's child you might be left unchastened; but inasmuch as you are dear to Him, He will whip you when you disobey. If you were only a bit of common clay God would not put you into the furnace; but as you are gold and He knows it, you must be refined. And to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon you (1Pe 1:6-7-note). Because you are bound for heaven, you will meet with storms on your voyage to glory (1Th 3:2-4-note).

If you are in the midst of a trial, an adversity, a period of suffering, you, like most of us, begin to have thoughts like "Does God really care about me?" Then beloved, the truth in this section is for you. The answer is a loud, resounding "Yes, He cares about you!" If you are in the midst of the furnace of affliction, take a moment and listen to the old (1904) hymn by Civilla D. Martin entitled [God Will Take Care of You](#).

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,
Through every day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

Through days of toil when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,
Through every day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

All you may need He will provide,
God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,
Through every day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,
Through every day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

Have you confidence in God as to these storms? Can you say, in the language of the text, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if He is everything to you, you may say this confidently, for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last (2Ti 4:18-note). Trust Christ for everlasting salvation: mark the word "everlasting." (2Pe 1:11KJV) I thank God, that when I believed in His Son Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance: I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ (Php 1:6-note, 1Th 5:24-note). I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two, but for all the days of my life, and to eternity. I want your faith to have a "hand" of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Savior to the uttermost (Heb 7:25KJV-note). I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise; but I know in whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me (2Ti 1:12-note), so that when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it. "I shall come forth." Like the three holy children, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter (Da 3:16-19-note), yet the Son of God will be with me in the furnace (Da 3:25KJV-note), and "I shall come forth" with not even the smell of fire upon me (Da 3:27-note). Yes, "I shall come forth," and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence, and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward (Jas 1:12-note, 2Co 4:17-note). Hath He not promised that we shall never perish (Jn 10:28)? Shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us. "He knows the way that I take" (Job 23:10note): therefore, "when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril. But He knows our way even to the end (Ps 1:6-note), and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked. But our Lord's foreseeing eye hath swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eye has spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through (2Cor 12:9-10-note). If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic Revelation, and seen unimaginable horrors and heart melting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and "when he has tried us, we shall come forth as gold." Amen.

Listen to the words of Cowper's incomparable hymn [**"God Moves in a Mysterious Way"**](#)

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;

Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Read Spurgeon's sermon on Job 23:10 [Where Are You Going?](#)

Play the related song as your prayer beloved - [Refiner's Fire](#)

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold
And precious silver
Purify my heart
Let me be as gold
Pure gold
Refiner's fire
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for you Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for you my master
Ready to do your will

Purify my heart
Cleanse me from within
And make me holy
Purify my heart
Cleanse me from my sin
Deep within
Refiner's fire
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for you Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for you my master
Ready to do your will

Refiner's fire
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for you Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for you my master
Ready to do your will
And I am ready to do your will
Make me ready to do your will

Commentaries related to suffering

- 1Pe 1:6-7+
- 2Cor 4:17-18+
- Ro 5:3-5 +
- Job 23:10+
- James 5:7-11+
- See commentary on Hebrews 12:5-11
- See commentary on James 1:2ff

Related Resources:

- See in depth article on Afflictions-Suffering-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations
- New Testament Words Related to Affliction/Suffering
- Verses Related to Affliction/Suffering - note the "+" sign after each verse indicates an in depth comment is available.
- [Why? Seeing God in our Pain](#)
- [Out of the Ashes](#)
- [What does the Bible say about suffering?](#)
- [Why do so many people have to experience terrible suffering before death?](#)
- [Why Would A Good God Allow Suffering? Finding goodness in trouble](#)