

Faith Is Action

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A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE



A Pearl of GREAT Price

So often when a child of God is being tested through fiery trials of faith and tribulations, he questions God as to the purpose or extent of the trial. Overwhelmed by human feelings and reasoning, he finds the testing severe and perhaps, *unnecessary in his estimation*. Hopefully, this message will help such an one to understand God's purpose in testing him and His ways of developing and perfecting His child into a precious and peculiar treasure.

I remember a personal experience when I was in a particularly long and difficult trial. I really got away with the Lord and began to tell Him all about it. When I had finished telling God in so many words how unfair I

thought my trial was, He began to talk to me. He said, "*Son, I want to tell you about the oyster...*"

I thought how the oyster sometimes gets a little grain of sand into its shell, and how that grain of sand is not a blessing to that oyster, but in fact, it agitates it sorely. It continues to agitate that tender oyster until the oyster reacts by secreting a soothing secretion that coats the intrusive grain of sand. Eventually it hardens around the grain of sand.

Then one wonderful day a sea diver finds that special oyster, and upon opening it up, discovers within its rough and grimy shell a beautiful treasure, an exquisite gem—a *pearl of great price!*

The oyster gives its life to produce that pearl. It costs him his existence, but instead of just being an old slimy oyster that will be devoured by others, it becomes a new creation: a beautiful gem to grace and adorn many beautiful things. Jesus called it "*a pearl of great price*":

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great



By R.G. Hardy

price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46).

This parable describes metaphorically *the kingdom of heaven*. (The literal translation is the kingdom *from* heaven, which is found only in *Matthew*, where Jesus is presented as "*Jehovah's King*." It refers to Christ's kingdom on *earth* and not to the *kingdom of God* which is spiritual and universal and takes in all time and eternity, of which God is King.)

Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a merchant seeking rare and costly pearls. When he found *one pearl of great price*, he sold all that he had, and purchased it. Likewise, God bought the world—but not that He wanted the world: but He wanted the *pearl* in the world. It too cost Him a very great price: The blood of His Only Begotten Son!

The Treasure In The World

He didn't want the world for the world: He wanted the *treasure in the world*! Within the kingdom of heaven, made up of both Jew and Gentile, all of those who profess to be sons of God (not all are true sons as illustrated in the *Parable of the Tares* in verses 36-42), He found a *pearl of great price, the true Church*:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (verse 44).

Jesus gave Himself for the *trea-*

sure, not for the world. Ephesians 5:25 states "*Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it.*" He gave Himself for the *Church*, but in order to do so, He had to purchase the world. God isn't interested in the world. The wicked are not going to be in His kingdom. He is going to purge them all out in the end, because the world is His: He bought it with His own life.

Someone might object that the world is God's by creation. Yes, but He gave dominion of it to Adam as His ruler and overseer. Adam lost it through disobedience and sin to Satan, so God had to *buy it back*, and someone had to pay the awesome price with His life: *Jesus!* He paid the price **not for the world**, but for the **hidden treasure: the pearl of great price!**

We, the Church, are that treasure He purchased. All the silver and all of the gold could not redeem us: It took *the blood of the sinless lamb, the innocent One* to purchase the *pearl of great price*: "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

In 1 Corinthians 6:20, Paul said, "*For ye are bought with a price...*" The Greek word for *bought* means "*ransomed back.*" The word for *price* means "*precious and costly.*"

Jesus loved you and me, the Church, so much that He gave Himself for us, and in order to do so, He

had to buy the world. He knew that *the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof, and the doers thereof* (1 John 2:15), but He wanted the treasure in the world: *the pearl of great price!* When He returns, His angels will separate the *wheat* from the *tares*, the *godly* from the *wicked* (Matt. 5:41), and He will gather unto Himself His chosen ones, His gems and jewels: *“And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them.... and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth not God”* (Malachi 3:17-18).

John 17, the story of Jesus’ great struggle in Gethsemane just hours before His crucifixion, is without doubt one of the most precious chapters in the Bible. It records the loving prayer of our Lord as He prayed so earnestly for His disciples, all of His followers, and for you and me. He knew that He was about to embark on a journey of suffering and death, and He sought His Father for the safekeeping of His little ones whom He had chosen out of the world as a *pearl of great price*, and whose ransom demand He was now to satisfy with His own blood: *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine”* (John 17:9).

Love Paid The Price!

God looked at the world and beheld fallen man in his sins and degradation, but He saw therein a

peculiar treasure, a pearl of great price, and so when no other price would suffice, the love of God gave the gift of His own Son: *“For when we were yet without strength”* (powerless to resist evil and do good), *“in due time”* (at the time of greatest need), *“Christ died for the ungodly... But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:6 & 8).

We are that *pearl* that Jesus gave His life to purchase! Everything in the universe could not buy it; it took the *life* and the *blood* of God, but God wanted that pearl so much, that there was no price too high for Him to pay! Nothing that He had created could redeem it: It took the life of the pure and sinless Son of God who suffered in agony unto death to pay the price. And we can never know how much He loves us until we partake of and fellowship with Him in His sufferings! *Only then* can we know what it took to redeem us. The sufferings will bring us closer to the Lord if we love Him.

Many Christians just serve God for His blessings and goodness, so when God sends the test to prove them, to see if they really love Him, they fail. They cannot stand the pressure, because their hearts are not really in it, and they backslide on God. Those who endure the tests are better and stronger Christians for it, and God uses the trials to perfect them and beautify them as precious gems in His sight.

Fellowship In His Sufferings

Child of God, you will never know how much God loves you by the way He *blesses you*. You can never calculate the depths of His love because He saved and healed you, paid your bills, and poured out great blessings upon you: No! You will never understand how much He loved you until you sit where He sat; until you wear the clothes of mockery and shame and the crown of sufferings; until you've walked the road up Golgotha's hill that He walked, until your back is flayed open with stripes, and your face smitten and spat upon.

You will never know how much God loves you until the ten thousand pass you by; until all of your loved ones forsake you, your brothers and your sisters and friends; until that beloved friend to whom you did good and who ate bread with you at your table, betrays you and lifts up his heel against you, and sells you out with a Judas' kiss (Ref. Ps. 41:9).

You will never know how much God loves you until you are a partaker of His sufferings! Paul said, *"I want to know Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings!"* (Phil. 3:10). Those whom God is "keeping" just by His blessings, who never endure deep trials and tests, cannot know how much God loves them, and they are not really intimate friends with the Lord.

If one is so weak and wishy-washy that God has to keep enticing him with gifts and blessings, he is on very thin ice spiritually. His salvation

is in a very precarious state if God has to keep showering blessings upon him to keep him saved. He is not serving Jesus because he loves Him: *He is just serving Him for the fishes and the loaves!* The trials and tests never drive away the one who genuinely loves Jesus—*They draw him closer!*

Like the relationship between an husband and wife who really love each other: She doesn't just love her husband because he goes out to work every morning and brings home the paycheck to put food on the table and buy her new clothes and conveniences. But when he's out of a job, and he's discouraged and thinks everybody is against him; that's when if she really loves him, she sticks by him, understands and supports him. That's when they draw closer together: in trouble, in heartache, in sickness, grief and sorrows. These times and seasons cement the relationship so that nothing can separate them.

When we really love Jesus, we will walk through the valley with Him. Instead of murmuring and complaining, we weep with joy to know how much Jesus loved us to walk through that valley for us. When He puts that heavy cross on our shoulders, instead of belly-aching, we shed tears of love every time it chafes us and rubs us, because we begin to know how much Jesus loved us to carry that cross for us to Calvary. Every time men spit upon us and ridicule us for Christ's sake, we rejoice to know how much *Jesus endured the*

contradiction of sinners, because He loved us! (Heb. 12:3).

Are you mad at the Lord because you think that He is not giving you enough bread? Are you mad at Him because you think that He is not giving you all of the things and blessings that you feel you deserve? Are you ready to throw up your hands and quit and turn your back on Him? If so, you do not love *Him*. You are just interested in the *fishes and the loaves!*

As long as Jesus was breaking the bread and multiplying the fish, they wanted to make Him king! They thought that everyday He would work a miracle and everyday was going to be a picnic. All that they would have to do was follow Him, and He would supply their every need. They thought they had it made. I imagine they said, *"We have heard how that our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, but this is even better—We're getting fish too!"*

Sure a lot of people will follow the Lord as long as He is supplying all their needs (which He has promised in His Word to do), and as long as the blessings are flowing, but when it comes time for the *tests* (and we all must be proven), they start turning back. When Jesus multiplied the fishes and the loaves, the multitudes followed Him, but when He got down to preaching the hard stuff, they left Him in droves until He even turned to His twelve and asked, *"Will you go also?"* (John 6:68).

The Lord had to work on Peter a

bit to make him into one of His pearls. He was excited by the many miracles Jesus performed and by the great power that He demonstrated, and by the authority by which He spoke. He was pleased to be known as one of the Master's disciples, and he is mentioned first on every occasion in the Gospels. He enjoyed this new authority and notoriety, but when it came time to know Jesus in His sufferings and rejection, Peter wasn't ready. He liked it when Jesus multiplied the fish, and raised the dead, opened the blind eyes, and cleansed the leper, but when they led Him into Pilate's judgment hall to be mocked and scourged, Peter did not want to know Him then. The Lord had to work on him to bring him to that place.

Friend, God is working on us to become *pearls of great price*. There are only a few that bring a great price, a king's ransom. Jesus said *"Strive to enter in at the strait gate, (hard, pressing). For many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able"* (Lk. 13:24). Only a few will make it. But those few are going to be *pearls of great price* to the Master! Of them He is going to say,

"They are worthy! They are worth every drop of blood that I shed on Golgotha's hill; they are worth every scar on My brow, and every bit of suffering and shame that I endured. I despised the shame, but I looked forward with joy to the glory that was behind the cross. It was worth it all to buy the world to

redeem those few who would walk with Me in the fellowship of My sufferings! *And if they suffer with Me, they shall also reign with Me* and share in My glory!” (Refs. Heb. 12:2, 2 Tim. 2:12).

When God first gave this message to me, I had been praying, “Lord, why are you putting me through these tests and trials?”

He said, “*Son, I am trying to make you a pearl of great price.* That little grain of sand doesn’t please that oyster one bit. It is an extreme irritant to him, and ultimately costs him his life, but it is creating of it a priceless pearl.”

He continued to speak to me: “I know, Son, that you do not like these trials and tests, but they are purging out your old life, that old nature, and creating in you My divine nature. Therefore, I must allow these things to come upon you, but every time the test gets a little bit too hard, I am going to lick you with grace just like that oyster coats that grain of sand.”

Tempted in All Points

I find in His Word that *every test* that you and I have to go through, *Jesus already endured.* Hebrews 4:15 states, “*He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” He took on our humanity and walked where we have to walk, and sat where we have to sit. His flesh was just as much flesh as our flesh. Born of a woman, He became truly man with all of our desires and passions. The only difference between Him

and you or me is that He was like Adam was *before he sinned.*

“*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*” (Heb. 2:18).

He had like passions as we have, wanting to be accepted and liked just like any of us, but instead, *He was despised and rejected of men, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him* (Isa. 53:3). And in Gethsamane, He struggled in great agony to become willing and obedient to drink the Father’s cup of sufferings for you and me (Lk. 22:44). Having finally prayed three times to win this personal battle, He then, though weary and exhausted from His great ordeal, prayed for His precious ones: those *pearls of great price* for whom He would now go all the way to Calvary and not look back.

What did He need that He would be willing to give His own life? He owned everything by right of creation, but He looked beyond the evil and sin of the world that was beautiful and perfect in the day that He created it, and He looked beyond the sins and rebellion of His fallen creatures made in His likeness and after His image, who were now marred and polluted by sin. He saw the potential in some of those fallen ones to become *pearls of great price.* And He knew that the price of Calvary would be worth it all when He raised us up as sharers of His glory, to walk with Him in white and sit upon thrones in His eternal kingdom!

Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross

We have got to keep our first love for Christ ever before us. We must keep the ultimate picture of His love for us as He hung on the cross ever present in our minds. Jesus, keep me near the cross, so that I can always keep my eyes on the highest expression of Your love for me! If I could have given my own life for my sins, it would have been a just price to buy my own soul. If I could have died, crucified like Him, it would have been a cheap price to pay to gain eternal life. But God so loved the world that He sent His son to suffer and die and shed His blood that I might have life.

The only reason why I suffer now is that I might know how much He loved me, and serve Him faithfully and unselfishly even as He lived and died for me. When God opened this truth up to me, I began to pray, “Lord, help me not to murmur and complain because of the testing, but help me to understand how much You endured in love for me. Help me to see that *pearl of great price* that You are making of me. Don’t let me become weary in well-doing and faint in my heart and fail You, Lord, when You have counted me worthy to serve You in these evil and perilous times, when men’s hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of lusts and sin, and their love has waxed cold. When many have left their first love, and cast off their faith: Don’t let me fail when You have counted

me to be one of those *pearls of great price* who will stand true!”

Saints, God has called us to be a *peculiar people* (1Pet. 2:9) for this day and hour when the world cannot cope with the things that are coming upon the face of the world. Jesus prophesied: “*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*” (Matt. 24:12). Many have left their first love (Rev. 2:4), and their love for God and for the lost have waxed cold. He has confidence in you and me that if He would reveal unto us this glorious salvation, and fill us with His Holy Spirit, that we would be as *chosen vessels* unto Him: *pearls of great price, holy and sanctified unto His call!* (2 Tim. 2:21).

He looked down unto this generation, an *adulterous and perverse generation*, and He knew that *many would depart from the faith in these latter times* (1 Tim. 4:1). He knew that many would be deceived by the deceitfulness of lusts and riches, and the cares of life, and the lust for other things, but He knew that He could count on us to stand up for righteousness and not compromise! (Matt. 21:34).

Counted Worthy To Suffer

Let us remember the example of Peter and John in Acts 5:41 when they were beaten for preaching in the Name of Jesus: When they were let go, “*they departed rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name!*”

God is seeking for a people who will deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him, but many are following the prosperity-seekers and the kingdom-now preachers. They want the shady green pastures and the Pharisaic seats of prominence and the tithes of men. When it comes time to climb the steep and jagged mountain and tread the narrow rocky pathway, they look for an easier gospel. They only want the blessings. They are not *worthy* of His sufferings.

God knew that many last-day preachers and whole churches and organizations would backslide, rebel against holiness and let down their standards. He knew that when they were pressured by popular trends, they would let down and go with the crowds. If many of the founders of these denominations and organizations were alive today to see how liberal and tolerant they have become, they would collapse in disbelief.

God knew there would be many preaching for the fishes and the loaves, and multitudes would follow them out of greed and the pride of life. He knew it would be a day when *"Men will be lovers of pleasure and lovers of self more than lovers of God"* (2 Tim. 3:2), a day of false teachers and many who would *"heap to themselves false teachers to soothe or scratch their itching ears"* (2 Tim. 4:3). He knew that it would be a day of hirelings who were only out to make merchandise of the Gospel and fleece the sheep of God, and *"with*

good deeds and fair speeches, they would deceive the hearts of the trusting." God knew *"many would depart from the faith, giving heed to teaching demons and doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim. 4:1).

But He also knew there would be a *few*: a precious, holy, sanctified, purified, tested, tried, proven, sold-out few who are unto Him *a pearl of great price: a unique treasure, His hidden ones.*

The Test Is Not Too Great!

These precious jewels of God will not falter in the fiery trials of faith, *but they will come forth as pure gold and silver tried in the refiner's fire!* In fact, they are going to be better, stronger, wiser, and humbler, because they endured the test. They are going to know God in a deeper intimacy and enjoy a sweeter relationship with Jesus, because they have fellowshiped with Him in His sufferings. Their relationship with Him is going to be cemented by these times and seasons of testing when *they are proving His Word, and He is proving their love.* And His Word has declared that *"nothing shall be able to separate us from His love: No tribulation, no persecution, no distress, no peril, nothing present, nothing to come: Nay, in all of these things we are more than conquerors!"* (Romans 8:35-39).

So, Child of God, remember the words of Peter who was more than once in the refiner's fire: *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the*

fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you... 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 4:12 & 1:7).

Therefore, no matter how unfair or unnecessary we might feel that the test is, we must realize that God sees what we can be if we allow Him to work on us. He is doing a twofold work in our lives as He allows us to walk with Jesus in His sufferings: To know His great love for us when we were unloveable! And He is creating of us a godly treasure, *a pearl of great price!*

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The Greek terms used here refer to a *hand-crafted work of art*. God is designing us to be a priceless treasure to adorn His kingdom. Sometimes we feel the pressure of His hand as He works upon us, but the pressure is necessary to produce that perfect, flawless gem.

As God continued to reveal these answers to my questions concerning the testings I was enduring, He brought me to one final, eye-opening truth that I had never thought about before. I was already beginning to understand:

1. I would never be tested or

tempted in any point that Jesus had not already been tested on (Heb. 4:15).

2. How much He loved me to suffer all that He did to be able to know my human weaknesses (Phil. 2:7-8, Heb. 2:17).

3. God wanted a proven vessel that would serve Him because he loved Him, and not just for the blessings it would bring (2 Tim. 2:21).

But I had not yet fully understood that Jesus suffered one battle and one agony that *I would never have to suffer: to be totally forsaken!*

When I began to visualize Calvary and my Saviour hanging on that cursed tree, and I saw the wounds in His hands and feet, and the blood that stained His face and chest, and the stripes that opened up His back, and the piercing that opened up His side, I was *beginning* to comprehend *what He suffered for me*—I was *beginning* to comprehend the *love* that it took to hang Him there on that despised cross: But it was not until I *heard* Him cry out from a broken heart unto His Father, *“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* that I knew that I would never be tested so severely! I would never be totally forsaken. For He has promised: *“I will never leave thee. I will never forsake thee...” (Heb. 13:5) Lo, I am with thee always!” (Matt. 28:18).*

In His weakest and darkest hour, His Father turned His back on Him.

He had already suffered the ridicule and mockery of those whom He had come to save. They had shouted, “Give us Barabbas the murderer to be set free,” as they cried out for His crucifixion. And Peter, for whom He prayed so earnestly, had denied Him three times, while the priests spit upon Him and smote His face. But all that He suffered, and all that He endured could not equal the total abandonment and rejection that He felt when His Father could not look upon Him, and turned His back on Him!

Because He became the sin-bearer for you and me, and the sin offering for all of mankind, and took our place as the sacrifice to atone for our sins, His holy and righteous Father could not look upon Him. Suspended between heaven and earth, He represented every vile and unclean murderer, thief, liar, every fallen man and wicked sinner.

God showed me I will never have to be alone in my darkest hour of testing, in my weakest moment of trial like Jesus was. No, He has promised that He will never forsake me, and if my testing becomes too great, He will make a way of escape that I shall be able to bear it! *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (1 Cor. 10:13).

The Hidden Treasure

Hanging on that cross of shame, Jesus knew that even though He was dying for the sins of the *whole world*, He was not dying for the majority. Sad to say, the multitudes will not choose to follow after Christ and gain eternal life. Even so, He was willing to die for those who would accept His free gift of salvation and eternal life, and in turn, would serve Him faithfully. The cost was incomparable, but Jesus paid it, purchasing the world with His own blood. And yet, it was not the world that He coveted: It was the *hidden treasure in the world that He sought and bought*.

It behooves us, Redeemed of God, to prove worthy of His great sacrifice that not one of us could have made for ourselves. In order for us to really become the precious jewels that God has purchased with His own blood, we must stand the test! The test is not to chastize us, but to create us into *godly pearls*. Blessings bring us personal gain, *but testings will make us more valuable to God!*

When the tests come, and the pressures increase, we must realize that God is only trying to *increase our value of service to Him*. (This does not mean that God will love us more: God does not love us because we’re valuable—we are valuable because He loves us.)

One day we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of what sort our works and deeds for Christ have been (2 Cor. 5:10). The Word of God declares:

“The day shall declare it, and the fire shall try it.” Many will be made manifest as works of *“wood, stubble, and hay.”* But others when tried, will be found to be works of *“gold, silver, and precious stones!”* (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

Paul also: *“But in a great house there are both vessels of dishonor, wood and earth, and of honor, gold and silver. If a man will purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim. 2:20-21).