

The Hour of Testing

© Tim Dubberly, September 17, 2000

Text: John 16: 25-33

Introduction:

Throughout the word of God, we find many scriptures that warn us of the testing of our faith that we will face in this life. However, we find many scriptures that promise that God will stand by our side, no matter what we face. The real question is, will you remain faithfully committed to God?

Jesus was preparing his disciples for His departure. He wanted them to know the things that they were about to face. He had been speaking to them in metaphors and parables because they could not understand. But here He became very clear as to what He wanted to say. No doubt, as they stood there and listened to Him, they probably thought that Jesus didn't know them very well for they would never run or deny Him.

Living for the King means more than standing when others are standing, it means standing for Him when no one else is standing. Being faithful is not an option it is a commandment.

In a far country lived a band of minstrels who traveled from town to town presenting music to make a living. They had not been doing well. Times were hard; there was little money for the common folk to come to hear the minstrels, even though their fee was small. Attendance had been falling off, so early one evening the group met to discuss their plight. "I see no reason for opening tonight," one said. "To make things even worse than they may have been, it is starting to snow. Who will venture out on a night like this?" "I agree," another disheartened singer said. "Last night we performed for just a handful. Fewer will come tonight. Why not give back their meager fees and cancel the concert? No one can expect us to go on when just a few are in the audience." "How can anyone do his best for so few?" a third inquired. Then he turned to another sitting beside him "What do you think?" The man appealed to was older than the others. He looked straight at his troupe. "I know you are discouraged. I am too. But we have a responsibility to those who might come. We will go on. And we will do the best job of which we are capable. It is not the fault of those who came that others do not. They should not be punished with less than the best we can give." Heartened by his words, the minstrels went ahead with their show. They never performed better. When the show was over and the small audience gone, the old man called his troupe to him. In his hand was a note, handed to him by one of the audience just before the doors closed behind him. "Listen to this, my friends!" Something electrifying in his tone of voice made them turn to him in anticipation. Slowly the old man read: "Thank you for a beautiful performance." It was signed very simply – "Your King."

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Being faithful is not always easy but it is important. We never know who will be there but we can be sure that Jesus will. Be faithful even when it is not popular. Here are a few of the “warnings” from Jesus.

I. The trial of division will come to your life. (32)

- A. Jesus warned them that they would be scattered. I don't know of He was speaking as a preacher or a profit, but I believe that He not only wanted them to know what they were going to face but that they would be given the strength to overcome.
- B. He wanted them to know that their commitment would be tested. Today in our world our commitment is tested everyday. Marriage success rates are at an all time low. Commitment to children, jobs, family, and friends are showing a tremendous deterioration.

g Thomas Drew had a large family. There was a time when he loved his Bible, attended his church, and endeavored to instruct his children in the fear of God.

Finding work became difficult, and Thomas struggled hard against poverty and sickness. His trials were very great: and instead of taking those trials to the Lord in prayer, he sunk into a low state, little short of desperation. This was Satan's opportunity. When Thomas was reduced to this condition, and he feared that his wife and children would be famished, he meditated and planned a step at which he would have formerly shuddered: he resolved on stealing a lamb from the flock of a neighboring farmer. This, after many inward struggles was accomplished, and that too without detection. The lamb was killed, and brought home. To the inquiries of his wife, Thomas gave an evasive answer, and part of the stolen provision was cooked for supper. The poor woman called her husband from the loom when it was ready, and he was about to follow his usual custom of asking a blessing; his tongue faltered, and he could not do it; but snatching up the dish from his astonished family, he went with it to the farmer's house, and confessed his guilt.

"My life," said he, "is yours, or if you spare it, I will try to pay you for the lamb." The farmer was touched at his tale of misery, and the voluntary confession of the theft. He told the poor fellow to take the dish and its contents back to his cottage, and freely forgave him of what he had done.

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- C. Jesus knew it would take a focused faith if they were to withstand the attack of the enemy. Scripture tells us to fight the fight of faith; we have to fight to keep faith and trust in God.

II. The temptation to abandon the faith will come to your life. (32)

- A. Jesus told them, “You shall leave me alone.” But he also told them that He would not be alone. He wanted them to know that if they stood for God, God would stand for them.
- B. He knew when enough pressure is applied to ones life it can bring panic to the heart. When we panic we stop thinking rationally or spiritually. We need to stay calm and in control of our faith.
- C. Most people know that sheep can easily be scattered when the shepherd can not be seen. However, Jesus wanted the disciples to see Him through spiritual eyes, for He told them exactly where He would be. Sheep look at the shepherd when trouble arises.

III. The tribulation of the world will come to your life. (33)

- A. Jesus knew that the devil would throw everything at them, including the kitchen sink. Tribulation (*Thlipsis*) is pressure, oppression, stress, anguish, tribulation, adversity, affliction, crushing, squashing, squeezing, distress. *Thlipsis* is putting a lot of pressure on that which is free and unfettered. This word is used in the crushing of grapes.
- B. When tribulation comes to our life we too face that crushing, binding pressure that comes to take away our freedom. We feel that pressure of life increasing and we must stop it through our faith in God.
- C. Jesus knew that satan would try to squeeze the life out of His disciples like he wanted to sift Peter as wheat. However, Jesus prayed for Peter and we too need to put a prayer covering over our church, family, and friends, so that their faith would not fail.

Conclusion:

Some might say this morning, “Why try?” The reason is this, Jesus told His disciples one more very important thing; He told them about His peace. He told them “in me you may have peace.” We know from reading God’s word that His peace passes all understanding. Then Jesus established the grounds for that peace, He said, “I have overcome the world.”

Today, many of us are probably feeling the effects of Jesus’ “warnings,” and we understand the crushing feeling whereby the devil is trying to enslave us again. But I just want to remind you that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. You can have that peace of Christ.

Sometimes we feel like it is not worth it and that nobody cares whether we have tried or done our best. So listen to this story.

g Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs during his baseball career, but on this particular day toward the end of his career, the Braves were playing the Reds in Cincinnati, and the great Bambino was no hero. He fumbled the ball and threw badly. In one inning alone, his errors were responsible for most of the five runs scored by Cincinnati.

As the Babe walked off the field and headed toward the dugout after the third out, a crescendo of angry cries and boos rose to greet him. Then... a boy jumped over the railing and ran out onto the field. With tears streaming down his face, he threw his arms around the legs of his hero.

Ruth didn’t hesitate for a second. He picked up the boy, hugged him, then set him down and patted his head. The cries from the crowd abruptly stopped. A hush fell over the entire park. In that brief moment, the fans saw two heroes on the field: Ruth, who in spite of his own dismal day in fielding, cared about the feelings of a young fan; and a small boy, who cared about the feelings of another human being.]

No matter your performance on the playing field of life today, the Lord has a hug awaiting you at the day’s end. He is your number one fan.
Gods little Devotional Book (220-221)

Knowing that God will never forsake us as long as we trust in Him, we must fight through the persecution, endure the pressure that comes upon us and persevere unto the end. The Hour of Our Testing will come!

References

Honor Books (1995) God’s Little Devotional Book. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Honor Books of Zondervan Publishing House

Hewitt, James S. (1988) Illustrations Unlimited. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers.

