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## Spiritual Formation Part 28

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### 1 Peter 1: 3-12

#### Being Refined in Christ

This passage is also about our God's most abundant mercy, love, and grace, given to us, without merit, before the foundations of matter and time. He loves and cares for us beyond any depth or limit, beyond any human comprehension. This inheritance is given to us so we can declare it to others. We know Christ because He has made Himself known to us so we can make Him known to others.

- *Tested...be found*, refers to a “crucible” for the refining of precious metals resulting in the quality refinement brings. Testing is compared to sufferings as a “crucible” which is a container made from a refractory substance such as graphite or porcelain, used for melting and purifying precious metals (such as gold) at high temperatures to separate impurities so to produce a finer and more valuable material, such as 14 carat gold made into 24 carat gold. We are purified and refined when we go through the effects and substances of life. They have a purpose; nothing happens to us without a reason that is meant to teach and grow us (Job 23:10; Psalm 12:6; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 43:2; Jer. 11:4; 1 Cor. 4:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:5; 4:13; 5:1).
- *Receiving*. We have received His grace and are called to enjoy our relationship with Christ. This brings us peace, but the fruition of our faith is still to come in eternity. Our deliverance is still to come! Our testing should bring joy and comfort, even with dire stress, because God is still carrying and loving us through it and we will be better, stronger, and purer for it. We will be of better use to Him and to all those around us. The key to get through it is in seeing Christ as the goal and being more like Him in character, rather than focusing on the situations in which we find ourselves. Persecution was the main testing that Peter's readers were facing.
- *Souls*. This means our *self*—the core of who we are as an individual person—same as the *spirits in prison* (1 Pet. 3:20).
- *Manner of time/find out the time* is a statement meaning the coming of the Messiah, which Christ fulfilled. It means the prophets foretold there would be suffering and that the Messiah would suffer as well as be exalted. Purpose and meaning in life were often considered mysterious to the Jew. However, for us, it has been fully revealed; it is to know Christ and make Him known (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 11:1; Dan. 12:6-9).
- *The Spirit of Christ*. This is one of the names for the Holy Spirit, meaning Christ sent Him. It does not denote that Jesus is the Spirit; the Trinity is three Persons

in one Essence—one God, with three personalities or manifestations. Here, the Spirit intercedes, breaking the sin barrier of our heart to give us redemption. In the O.T., servants of God were given glimpses and parts of the Spirit working in them, empowering them for a specified function (Gen. 41:38; Num. 27:18; Acts 2:33; 16:6-7; Rom. 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:45; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 4:14).

- *It was revealed* refers to the mysteries to which God gave the O.T. prophets a glimpse—of things to come that were to benefit and encourage future generations. We do not know what they were exactly—probably the Gospel message of Christ. However, for us, this refers to the message of the Gospel being infused by the Holy Spirit and then lived out in our lives; it is that Jesus Christ, being fully God, lived in behalf of us, took our place for God's wrath, suffered in our place, and redeemed us. It is a call to us to be the messengers of the Gospel along with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:25-27, 45-47).
- *Holy Spirit sent from Heaven* refers to the role of the Spirit to inspire and direct—from the books of the Bible to the messages of the Prophets to the hearers of God's Word. It also means that the place of origin, the source of the Gospel message, and that is only from the Holy Spirit. Even though we evangelize, only the Holy Spirit can cause the Word to make sense and allow it to be received by the person (John 3:3-6; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 4:6).
- *Angels desire to look.* The celestial beings may seem ominous to us, but they are created beings and have limited knowledge. They have the same emotions and will that we have—the reason 1/3 of them fell—and they are curious and interested in the things of God—the reason 2/3 remained loyal to God. God, who had not told them everything, now made His plan known (Eph. 3:10).

God does not test us to bring us harm nor does He seek to cause us to fail. Rather, He wants to see if our faith and commitment are real and brings us into situations where we can learn and grow in faith and so receive our reward. We can take comfort in trials, as God is still sovereign over them. His purpose is to refine us, form us, mold us, improve us, restore us, grow us, and strengthen us. Testing can also be used to bring us to contemplate our attitude, mindset, and deeds so we can seek repentance and so we will “wake up,” see our error, and seek Him. He does this much as a loving parent disciplines a child. Other times, God tests to bring about discipline, justice, and judgment. Jews believe that suffering brings atonement, but this is not what Peter means; rather, that faith is a precious commodity to God (Gen. 11:1-f; Deut. 8:2; 13:3; Judg. 2:22; Job. 23:10; Rom. 5:3; James 1: 2-4, 12-16; 1 Pet. 4:17; 5:1-4, 8).

### **Questions**

1. What can you do to praise God more for His grace and salvation?
2. Even if you do not see Jesus, how can you have the confidence that He sees you, loves you, and helps you persevere?

3. God's purpose is to refine you, form you, mold you, improve you, restore you, grow you, and strengthen you. So how do you feel about that? What can you do to let it happen more?
4. When you are under the stresses and hostile occupations of life, what can you do to move away from stress and seeing only your situation to seeking the improving of your faith?
5. Do you feel, deeply, that God literally keeps you through faith? If so, why? If not, why not? What can you do about it?
6. What can you do to prevent yourself from ever taking for granted your faith or what Christ has done for you?
7. How can your faith in Him give you comfort that the reward of your faith far outweighs any struggles you face?
8. God wants you to see if your faith and commitment can be real and He may bring you into situations where you can learn and grow in your faith and so receive our reward. So how can you have more confidence in these situations? How can you keep your focus on Christ and not your situation?
9. What does it mean to you to live a life of real authentic Christianity?
10. What do you need to do to feel and respond to God by living a life filled with purpose and distinction, a life worth living, a life of contentment?