



ALL YOUR HOPE

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, August 8, 2021

Here is a Scripture verse that every Christian would do well to commit to memory, since it has application so often in our lives:

1 Corinthians 10:13 *The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure. (NLT)*

Apostle Paul has reminded us that there isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans. Someone else, somewhere, is familiar with what you're facing (maybe not the specific details, but the inner experience).

And God, who faithfully keeps His promises, will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist. We all have power to resist that we're unaware of, because the Holy Spirit lives in us to help us. We need only ask Him in that tenuous moment.

But when you are tempted, God will also give you the ability to endure the temptation as your way of escape. We usually look for an immediate "way out" in order to avoid enduring it, but the way out that God provides is THROUGH the trial, for it has not come to us without purpose, and it will not leave us without fulfilling that purpose (whether we recognize it or not).

But why? Why must we be tested and tried?
What is God up to in all this?

As someone cynically put it: "Life is hard; then you die." Is that all we have to look forward to?

Let me share with you the backstory... or rather, let Peter share it with you (1 Peter 1:3-13):

³All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by His great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. ⁵And through your faith, God is protecting you by His power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

⁸ You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. ⁹ The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰ This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. ¹¹ They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when He told them in advance about Christ's suffering and His great glory afterward. ¹² They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

¹³ So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

Look Behind

Peter reminded us, that to have the proper perspective, we must first look to the past—for therein lies the foundation of our faith and life. So, Peter wrote:

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by His great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

We magnify the God of the incarnation, for the Son of God became the Son of Man—one of us.

We praise the God of all grace, for He looks beyond our faults to see our need—He forgives our sins and cleanses our conscience and produces in us a new birth.

We worship the God of the resurrection life, who shares with us the same resurrection life as is manifest in Jesus Christ our Lord.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Look Ahead

We also look to the future—the Day of the Lord—when our hope will be realized and our trust will be rewarded and our love for God and His creation, especially the Church, will be fulfilled.

Peter continued...

Now we live with great expectation,⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by His power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.

We have a “great expectation,” and we have it NOW. Expectation which we did not have before, but we do now. Our expectation is great, for it swallows up our past—all guilt and shame and fear and loss—and it unfolds into a “priceless inheritance.”

This inheritance is secured—“kept in heaven for you.” Our lives today are full of change and decay—in us and all around us—but what Christ has won for us is secure, where it cannot be lost, where change and decay cannot diminish it.

And NOW, through your daily walk of faith in Christ, God protects you! He is your Shield and your Defense. He fights your battles for you! And He will continue to do so UNTIL you receive the fullness of this salvation that Christ has purchased for you.

You see only the surface of it NOW, but it will be fully revealed on the Last Day, and everyone will see it and acknowledge it then. *“So be TRULY glad. There is wonderful JOY ahead. Even though you must endure many trials for a little while.”*

Ah, there’s the rub! Why can’t we just leapfrog to the “wonderful joy” and skip the “many trials”?

Because, in a word, you *need* the many trials. Much of the pain you experience is actually mental grief, because you think the trials are intended as punishment for your errors and sins, and they seem out of proportion, or others misjudge you and mistreat you and it seems unjust.

And when you think you’re being unjustly treated, you resist—you pushback. Since March 2020, with the rise of the global COVID pandemic, cascading political unrest and violence, the rise of racial tensions and fear—we’ve wanted to push back or to escape, but it hasn’t resolved our problems. It doesn’t stop the trials.

God has told us (1 Corinthians 10) that He gives us “the ability to endure as our way of escape.” Why does He want us to endure these trials?

⁷ *These trials will show that your faith is genuine.*

Trials do not MAKE your faith genuine; it already is. But trials are required to show you, and anyone else who is watching (and many are) that it is genuine—this is real faith; not the flash-in-the-pan kind, but the lasting kind, the kind that endures, that survives!

In fact, it is not YOU that is being tested, but your FAITH.

⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It (your faith) is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold.

Your faith is GENUINE and it is PRECIOUS (more precious than gold!). When I speak the Aaronic Blessing over you week after week, I remind you that God “smiles over you” because YOUR FAITH—every thought of Him, every act done for His honor—brings Him great delight.

^{7b} So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

“On the Day...” What will transpire on that Day?

YOU will be honored in the presence of Christ the Lord. All Heaven will witness it, and rejoice. On that Day.

⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by His power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

If we jump ahead to verse 10, we learn still more about that Day...

¹⁰ This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. ¹¹ They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when He told them in advance about Christ’s suffering and His great glory afterward.

It was a Day greatly anticipated by those who knew God and who listened to His words. It is the Day when Jesus Christ will be revealed to the whole world—for who He is and what he has done.

How He suffered for us, to ransom us from sin and death, and how God rescued Him from death’s grip and raised Him from the grave, and caught Him up to Heaven where He received great Glory and an everlasting Kingdom.

And, when all that is fully revealed to the whole world, our salvation—the fullness of the grace He has lavished on us—will also be fully revealed; the children of God will be fully manifested

to the world. When that Day comes, the Church will be honored, not despised, and praised, not mocked, as we share the glory of our Lord.

THAT's what the trials are doing for you!

Look Around

What do you see? Is there anything you CANNOT see?

I often wonder, "How can it be, that God should love a sinner such as I, and long to turn my sorrow into bliss, that He would bridge the gulf that my sin created between us and bring me near to His side to reign with Christ?" I cannot fathom such love!

⁸ You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. ⁹ The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls.

You LOVE Him.

You TRUST Him.

You REJOICE in Him.

Even though you have never seen Him with your natural eyes and you do not see Him now.

But with eyes of faith, we see Jesus, high and exalted, having completed His mission, now seated on the throne of God, already crowned with glory and honor.

And, as the writer to the Hebrews noted (Hebrews 2:10): *"It was only right that [God] should make Jesus, through His suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring [trusting humanity] into their salvation."*

Now, returning to Peter's words...

¹⁰ This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. ¹¹ They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when He told them in advance about Christ's suffering and His great glory afterward.

¹² They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

FOR YOU. This Good News has been announced to you, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel message is not words only, but words of truth, living words, life-giving words—the words of life. A child, the uneducated, can grasp them, because they are heard in the heart before the head ever learns them.

All this was done for you. God had you in mind from the beginning. He has you in mind still. God has “set His love” on you. Even the angels watch all this with amazement.

The prophets of old and the angels above are fascinated by this message. Aren't you? Does it bring you to the edge of your seat? Does it make your heart pound with joyous anticipation?

How to respond...? What should you do first?

¹³ So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

Having looked to the past—the works of the Lord—and having looked to the future—the coming Day of the Lord, we may now live fully in the present—though there are trials (for we are protected)—in praise, with great expectation, with true gladness and genuine faith—loving, trusting, and praising our Lord and Savior, Jesus—prepared in our minds for action, practicing self-control, putting all our hope in Jesus' glorious return—not just as the end of difficulties, but as God's glorious endgame: the revelation of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the beginning of the fullness of His covenant of grace with humanity. *What a day that will be!*

All your hope. In Jesus. Now.

Hope in His gracious love.

Hope in His faithful goodness.

Hope in His promised return.

Hope in His superior Kingdom.

Hope in His everlasting covenant.

Hope in the strong grip of his grace.

Hope in His great salvation.

It will come to you—in all of its fullness—on the Day of the Lord, when Christ returns.

Put ALL YOUR HOPE in this. From wherever your hope has been leaning—yourself, other people, human knowledge, world systems, even the church—transfer it now to Jesus Christ and the salvation He has won for you.

Do it consciously. Place all your hope in His hands, in His ways.

And now, with the Apostle Paul, I say, *“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in Him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:13)