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Go and make disciples!

E-votional 38

The Test

As I am reading through the letter to the Hebrews through the lens of a faith that is tested something very powerful comes to mind. This something that is very powerful has everything to do with certain predictions of our Lord Jesus Christ that pertains to tribulation or persecution and is followed up with by all of the Apostles. One place in particular where the Lord predicted this is found in Mark 4:17 (ESV),

“And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.”

There we have it “when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word.” This implies that there will be a time when each one who believes is tested in relation to their faith. In the book of Hebrews, there are testing’s from persecution as well as from false teachers. In either of these, the test is very real and takes an extreme amount of perseverance.

Pertaining to testing that comes from persecution the letter to the Hebrews says this,

“But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.”

(Hebrews 10:32-33) The writer of Hebrews states and also commands after these verses that such a one who is going through these things needs to endure so that after they have done God’s will they will also receive what is promised of God (v. 36). Furthermore, in verse 39, the writer proclaims that we are actually not like those who would fall away in the midst of such persecution but of those who through faith, endure and preserve their souls. This exhortation is much like the illustration that Jesus used in Mark 4.

Now, we relate the testing of our faith with that which comes through false-teaching as found in Hebrews 13:9 (ESV), *“Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.”* The reality that it is possible for a believer to be led away by strange and diverse teachings is in itself a real test of faith. To this, I am reminded of something that a beloved chaplain of mine once said. He said, *“know what you believe.”* He could not have been more right and to the point. For some of us, if we do not actually know and identify with what we believe we will be inevitably led away. Therefore, it falls under the parameters of a faith that is tested because it is a test of faith to be able to study to show oneself approved unto God by both knowing what they believe and also identifying with it through practical application in very real and often times negative circumstances.

When the integrity of what someone has learned meets opposition in the form of false-teaching one of two things can happen. The first thing is that when opposition arises one would find a lesson learned to fall back on and through faith and perseverance rise to the occasion and grow. Or, second is that it could turn one away from God wherein one would fall away from the faith.

In either case, whether from persecution or opposition from false-teaching one would need endurance to their faith to see them through. The opposite would be that fear comes along and chokes out the word and thus such a one would fall away. This idea of falling away receives a stark and shameful promise that if this one turns back from the faith and falls away that the Lord will have no pleasure in them. Hebrews 10:38 (ESV),

“but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

The purpose of the writer sharing this passage was to inform the believers that the Lord is coming back, so we should hasten the day and remain in the faith. By persevering and remaining in the faith we, in turn, are saved and will not shrink back in shame at His coming. Now, to support this last part, I turn to the Apostle in 1 John 2:28 (ESV),

“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.”

To summarize what we have learned here. It is entirely possible for someone to fall away from the faith. If it were not true, the Bible would not plainly say this. With this in mind, we can take courage and stand fast thus in the Lord because we know that the promise of His coming is not far off. Therefore, we today have this

hope as an anchor for our soul. We know not exactly when He shall come with trumpet sound, but we live if at any moment the promise will come. In regards to this, as was with the Hebrews, we will surely be opposed with persecution as well as false-teaching. For this reason, beloved, stand guard and always be prayerful and in everything keep your hearts free and clear from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and also the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Jesus is coming soon

In Christ's Love,
Chris and Jeanne
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