**Tried by Fire**

by Edwin L. Crozier

No one ever said life would be easy, especially for Christians. Well…actually…a lot of people have thought it, so someone may have said it. However, it isn’t a biblical message. God hasn’t saved us through Jesus Christ so we will have easy lives. He has saved us so we may have eternal life. As we wander in the wilderness on earth, awaiting our home in the Promised Land, we suffer. Sometimes we suffer because we are Christians; sometimes because we live on a fallen earth full of suffering. Sometimes our suffering will be minimal; sometimes it will be intense. Peter makes it clear that we will go through various trials (**I Peter 1:6-9**).

Whether these trials are specific to Christianity or just the general trials of life, Peter explains they test our faith. They do so to allow our genuine faith to result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus is revealed and for us to obtain the salvation of our souls. As far as God is concerned, these trials are not added to get us to stumble and fall. They are given to help us grow and glorify Him.

Peter compares this to the testing of gold by fire. This word picture drives home a profound point about our trials. How is gold tested and tried by fire? The goldsmith heats up the gold in the crucible until melted. The heavier gold rests at the bottom; the lighter impurities rise to the top. The goldsmith is then able to scrape away the impurity, purifying the gold and proving its genuineness.

Our sufferings and trials do the exact same thing for us. In the midst of suffering and trial our anger, pride, immorality, sinful escape mechanisms, foul thoughts and words, misplaced faith, false hopes, etc., rise to the top so they can be easily seen. Though this embarrasses us and we wish to cover it up, it is actually a good thing. In this way, our trials expose the weaknesses and sins still holding sway in our hearts. Like the goldsmith, having identified the impurities, we can seek God to scrape them off the top, working on them, removing them.

Sadly, this is the exact opposite of what most people do. Most people miss out on the growth opportunity in trial and suffering, believing their suffering mitigates and justifies their sin. They see the sin as the exception only committed in the “heat of the moment.” It was an unusual circumstance so unusual behavior is overlooked. The problem is when these sins come out in these moments, we are showing what is in our hearts. Under normal circumstances, we filter what is in our hearts. But in trying times, the filters falter and the impurities slip through.

When you whack your thumb with the hammer and let out a string of curse words, don’t think the painful circumstances justify the sinful behavior. When a co-worker betrays you so you explode with clamor and rage at your boss (or take it home and explode at your family), don’t think the exceptional circumstances excuse the sinful behavior. When a car pulls in front of you and your road rage comes in full force, don’t think the unusual circumstances mitigate the sin. Rather, recognize the lingering impurity in your heart. Seek God’s help and grace to remove that impurity and grow in Christ. This is the purpose of trials and suffering.

Be thankful for the trial, it is helping you draw closer to God for eternity.