

FIERY ORDEALS: A reality in our lives! - Page 1-2

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery ordeal which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s suffering, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12, 13

A FIERY ORDEAL IS ANY TRIAL OR SUFFERING WE GO THROUGH THAT CHANGES OUR WHOLE OUT LOOK ON LIFE. IT CHANGES THE VALUES FOR WHICH WE LIVE, AND THE THINGS WE LOVE.

A fiery ordeal can be the loss of a child or a spouse we dearly love, and it seems that life cannot go on any longer without them. It can be an accident that puts our life upside down, or the loss of a career or a ministry. It could be a marital failure, a devastating disappointment, tragedy, or betrayal. Many times it results in the loss of all that we hold important in this life and it can leave us with the feeling that nothing of value is left for us.

In these times the foundations of our life are being shaken and we are forced to look again at what we are in Christ. For some there will be only one or two fiery ordeals in their life while for others there will be one after another. These fiery ordeals are common to all people, and they are designed for our benefit. If you have never experienced such an ordeal, you may be sure that there will be one ahead. If you have been through one, you will understand clearly everything I am about to say. I pray this will help you to confront and walk through the fiery ordeals that will come in your life in Christ.

In 1 Peter 4:12-13 we see the church going through a time of great testing. Peter encouraged them in their sufferings to not be ashamed, but to glorify God in all things, and again to let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Let’s look at the church at the time he wrote this letter and at what the brethren were suffering. This was the reign of Nero, one of the cruelest persecutors of the church. The houses of the faithful were being broken into in the early morning hours. The family would be gathered together and interrogated about their faith in Christ. We are told that the little children would be asked, “Does your father or do you believe in Jesus?” Upon their confession, the child, or children, would be taken to be burned in Caesar’s gardens or to be sacrificed to wild animals. They would leave this message: “Deny your faith in Christ or we will be back. The next time we might take your wife or your grandfather. But for sure we will be back.” One can only imagine the psychological pressure and their heart-felt grief. Any mother could understand the agony of the following days and their desperate need to know that God was with them. This was the Church that Peter was writing to and they knew well the meaning of a fiery ordeal.

Another time of testing is when we walk through the wilderness. We must never forget that the world is a wilderness for true believers. The wilderness of the people of God is a place of testing and learning about faith and about the character of God. God is the God of the wilderness. He demonstrated that to Moses in a great way for forty years, and He is doing the same for us today as we go through our personal wildernesses and confront our fiery trials. The only answer to the suffering of the wilderness times in our life is trusting in God’s provision, just as He provided for the children of Israel in their time of need. It is God’s faithfulness that will conquer our doubts and will bring us through our testing times. There are many amongst God’s people who are suffering with broken hearts and who are troubled physically and emotionally. It may seem that there is no way out, and that the horizons in every direction are filled only with despair and discouragement, but God will bring us to a point of speechless joy when we see the fruit of His working in our lives. He will draw us back to the basic and important things of life, like faith, hope and prayer, as we depend on Him.

The sovereignty of God becomes not just a teaching, but a reality as we commit our souls to Him moment by moment. It is so true that He has a plan for us, that He is in total control of everything in our lives, and it is for our ultimate good that we are tested in such ways. This gives me hope beyond my trials, no matter how great they may be.

Our trials put our faith to the test and increase our confidence in Him. Our trials force us back to the foundation of our faith. It is a refining and necessary process in maturing in Christ. I see this truth as never before as I pass through this time of my spiritual life.

Peter said, “Don’t be surprised as if something strange was happening.” In other words, these things happen to those who walk with Jesus. Wasn’t Jesus also tested in all ways as we are? Be glad with exceeding joy--what is he saying? How is it possible to be glad in the midst of such pain? We become partners with the sufferings of Christ and we will also partake of His glory.

Some fiery ordeals last for a long time and leave us very tired and sometimes it seems to have no relief. A normal reaction to fiery ordeals is, “ I can’t believe this is happening to me!” Some go into shock and make things worse by filling their minds with bitterness and anger and sometimes even blaming God. Peter said, “Don’t be surprised.” God is molding you into the image of His Son. Our Christian maturity is measured by our ability to withstand trials.

Proverbs 24:10 says, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”, and Hebrews 12:3 says, “Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

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Peter said to keep on rejoicing. James goes on to say, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Why? That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." Philippians 3:10, 12b. There is a unique crown for those who endure fiery ordeals victoriously.

Our fiery ordeals will give us a glimpse of what Christ suffered. His greatest suffering was betrayal by those He loved most. These trials become a means to a greater end. The end is that we will have a deeper relationship with Christ and a richer reward in heaven if we persevere. Times of testing literally drop us to our knees and bring us closer to Christ, and our faith grows because of it.

Christ went to the cross and suffered a terrible death. He left heaven and came here, endured incredible hardships and never wavered. He felt abandoned by God and cried out, My God, why have you forsaken me? What sustained Him and even brought Him joy? "Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Paul described it in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

What sustained Moses through his many fiery ordeals? He suffered rebellion by a hard-necked, unloving people who criticized, threatened and totally misunderstood him. As Moses could see the end of his journey in the wilderness and even got to glimpse the promised land, so can we in our times of testing look beyond the test to the place of resting He has prepared for us. You may be fighting cancer, looking at the baby shoes that will never be worn, or struggling with the pain of a broken marriage, but take heart; the wilderness you are going through is just a short journey and we can glimpse the promised land before us. I can almost see it and I am filled with joy and excitement at the thought.

Jesus is a compassionate high priest who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities and in all points was tempted as we are, but was without sin. Are you hurting? Are you confused, full of delusion and pain, and you do not know why? Be encouraged that Jesus knows what you are going through and understands the pains you are suffering as He has been touched by them. He weeps with us and shares our pain. When a child suffers, the parents feel the pain even more than the child. Any parent will testify to the truth of this. Don't you think our heavenly Father feels our pain, even more than we do? You have never had a broken heart or shed a tear that Jesus did not share with you.

The Lord said in Hosea 2:14, "I will allure you into the wilderness, I will speak tenderly to you." Where? Not in the garden of Eden, but in the wilderness. God brought His people to a place of desolation to talk to them. Let God's redeeming grace in our fiery ordeals bring divine understanding to what He is doing in our lives; listen closely to every word He says. Remember it is not that we are under attack, but rather our life before God.

"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; he will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills." Habakkuk 3:17-19

"You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." Psalm.71:20-21

Take heart; God has promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." I pray this will speak to you.

I want to thank all of those who contributed and helped me through this article. I want to thank God for these principles and the people who love us so much to stand with us in the mist of fiery ordeals, Just as Christ is doing for us. Please stay faithful brethren as only the love of God can take us through these fiery ordeals.

WITH MUCH LOVE... CLARK