

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, February 8, 2026

### **The Trial of Our Faith is Precious to God**

***Ecclesiastes 1:13-15*** “13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 15 That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.”

I'd like to begin with a word about vexation. While it is not my primary focus for today, it is a sentiment that I often feel, and that I hear frequently expressed, and it threads nicely into my larger topic. All men are vexed in the course of their lives, but I am speaking of the particular vexation that is unique to the servants of God. Strong's defines vexation as “harassed, distressed, tortured, grieved; struggling against a head wind; tested (as metals)”. It is inescapable that we will be vexed in our souls while we make our pilgrimage. This vexation increases, the more that we come to understand of our own vile nature, the curse and corruption born of that nature, and the ever-growing wickedness of reprobate, Satan-inspired men. This vexation has been a part of the walk of faith that each of God's elect have experienced since the day that sin entered this world.

***2Peter 2:7-9*** “7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) 9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:”

This phrase about Lot being daily vexed is often uttered among us, likely because we can identify with it. This is a unique statement about vexation in the entire Bible, so let's look at it as more than a generality. Consider the context: 2Peter is a letter that is filled with statements and prophesy regarding the circumstances of Christ's return. This passage warns us about the rising danger of false prophets in the last days, and hollow, hypocritical profession of faith. He speaks of the days of Noah and the days of Lot, fleshing out some of the circumstances of their days; these are those same days and circumstances that Christ pointed to as harbingers of His coming. I think that we can fairly learn from this passage that Lot's vexation was uniquely intense and constant, as the nation around him became brazenly, deeply corrupted in route to unique and total destruction. We can expect vexation of soul to increase, the closer we get to the return of our Lord. It is hard to comprehend what we are seeing around us every day. It doesn't seem like it could get more bizarre, vile, or brazen ... and then it does. Justice and

judgment have fallen in the streets. In the midst of the endless folly of our generation, the most grievous thing to me is when some brazen rebel against God brings forth His name, and His word, twisting it into a demonic pretzel that glorifies and justifies sin. My soul yearns for the Lord to avenge himself, and stop the mouths of these presumptuous, filthy talkers.

Now that I've stated the obvious ... so what? What are we to do in the face of this vexation? Stay upon our God! Help each other to stay upon our God. Frame these vexatious happenings in the light of God's word, and what we know He has promised. Focus on the joy and blessings that our God has given us. Improve upon, and employ those blessings – minister and preach. Remember that the wicked must be prepared for destruction, and without that preparation and subsequent destruction, our Lord will not gather up His jewels and take up His throne in this earth. Help each other to walk in meekness, knowing what manner of creatures we are. It's easy to get a head of steam that belies our own awful sinful frame. Help each other to stay on task and stay on message. Consider the instruction and warning found in Revelation 13. Remember that this is the chapter where the tribulation in the world has reached it's wonderful and terrible crescendo as the Antichrist Beast has come to the fullness of his murderous power in the earth. In that context we get this warning:

**Revelation 13:9-10** *“9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”*

The patience and faith of the saints is challenged and tried constantly, and even more so as the day of the Lord approaches. We cannot devise some new flesh strategy that will help us. We cannot fret our vexation, fear, and distress away. We are sustained by patient continuance and faithful reliance upon God, as the heathen rage around us: *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” (Heb 10:38).*

What do we make of this particular warning not to kill or take captives? Certainly the saints of God shouldn't be killing and taking captives. That seems like a no brainer. Consider what we are witnessing as this nation seems to be devolving right before our eyes: captivity and killing is ramping up as the national and cultural wars, world over, continue to escalate. We see literal imprisonment and violence (including killing) escalating, moreover we are seeing larger and deeper faultlines forming between various societal factions; for all of their differences, the commonalities between these warring parties are these: 1) they hate God and refuse to submit to Him, and 2) they want to imprison and kill anyone that doesn't wear their gang's colors. We want no part in

the controversies of this world, beloved! We have no position to take. If we wade into these filthy waters, then we will sully the name of our Captain, and we will suffer right alongside them. Rather, we are to walk in the light of faith, patiently staying on task like the plodding ox, preaching with the boldness and nobility of the lion, while keeping in view what has been promised with eagle-eyed clarity. Don't turn to the right hand or the left. Stay on task - stay on message! Namely: There is nothing to "make great again". Our Lord is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those that do not know Him, and do not obey Him. Abandon your allegiance to this vile world, her controversies, and her delicacies, and set your affections on Christ and His Kingdom to come. The wrath of God is pouring out on you because of your rebellion - worse and more is coming! Repent and believe on Jesus Christ, else you will surely perish eternally. All that is left for the inhabitants of this earth is unparalleled tribulation, death, and eternal hell fire. Speaking of patiently staying upon God, consider this amazing promise that is reserved for us:

**Revelation 3:10-13** *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."*

Turning now to my focus: the trial of our faith that is precious to our loving Father. One note before we proceed: I want to point out that the word "temptation" that we have already encountered twice, will be a recurring theme, and it means the same thing as "trial". The modern connotation of "temptation" means "enticement to sin". The word is sometimes used that way in the scriptures, but more frequently it means "trial; proving ground; testing through adversity, affliction or difficulty." (Strongs 3986)

**1Peter 1:6-9** *"6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."*

This passage contrasts our current state: vexed, afflicted, mourning, enduring - against our future state: filled with unspeakable and unbreakable joy in the presence of Christ, praising and honoring Him. We have to keep the end of the matter freshly in our mind

while we endure the path – the often painful process of refining and preparing us. That preparation is compared here, and elsewhere in the scriptures, to the process of refining gold and silver.

**Malachi 3:2,3** “2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: 3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

**Isaiah 48:10,11** “10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11 For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.”

Humans go to great lengths to acquire and refine these precious metals, but ultimately they are all perishing things – the metal and the people. God, on the other hand, has intricately designed, and does diligently execute the process of refining His people. He has “chosen” the furnace of affliction – the method, the particulars, and the outcome – to perform this peculiar work; a work that will surely glorify Him, while purging, purifying, and enriching our souls for our eternal residence and employment.

**Isaiah 1:25** “And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:”

Let us consider the literal process of trying Gold and Silver in the fire, so that we can better understand the metaphorical application to our souls.

- Crushing, Washing, filtering: Once ore was painstakingly obtained by digging, mining, or sifting through streams, it was crushed into smaller pieces using stones or hammers, then washed with water, and roughly filtered to separate heavier metal bits from lighter waste.
- Smelting in the Furnace: The concentrated ore was placed in a crucible and put into a hot clay furnace fueled by charcoal or wood, heated intensely to more than 2000 degrees to melt the metal and begin separating it from rocky waste (slag); for silver, lead was often added to help draw out impurities. When this process was done, the precious metal was recognizable, but still mixed with various impurities, including other metals like lead, copper, or other base metals.
- Removing Impurities (Dross): As the metal liquefied, lighter impurities floated to the top and were skimmed off repeatedly; fluxes like salt or borax might be added to bind and remove stubborn contaminants.
- Cupellation: the metal alloy was heated again to near 2000 degrees in a porous cupel (a bone-ash cup) where lead oxidized and absorbed some base metals, and

others vaporized, leaving the pure precious metal behind; this is a very temperamental process that rises and falls on precise control of heat and air.

- Cooling and Testing: The refined metal was poured into molds to cool and solidify, then tested for purity by weight, color, or further heating; if not pure enough, the process repeated.
- Final Shaping: Pure gold or silver was hammered or cast into usable forms like coins or jewelry.

We see then that this testing / trial / proving is made up of diligent, carefully appointed, delicately managed work by the tester. The test includes the precious metal itself – broken up and impure; it includes an appointed time, and an appointed duration; it includes an appointed crucible of circumstances; it includes variables that are set within the context of that crucible – some already attached to the metal, and some introduced by the tester; it includes immense heat and pressure; and it is iterative / repetitive.

The trials of the soul – the heat of affliction - **will** come, beloved. They will be a teacher, a discerner, a divider, an expertly wielded instrument of holiness, in the hands of the Creator. Every time the Lord God sets us into the crucible of temptation and trial, He has intricately designed a specific purpose for that testing. Something specific is being purified. It's useful to recognize when we are in the furnace, so let's briefly consider some of the many categories of heart and circumstance that commonly make up a temptation of the soul:

- Mourning and sorrow for your own sin, and the fact that it caused Christ's suffering and shame.
- Fear of every kind.
- Loss of relationships (family and other close relationships).
- Loss of substance (wealth, material goods, etc).
- Loss of stability and security.
- Loss of reputation.
- Vexation at the wickedness of the world around you.
- Distress that despite your desire to do different, evil is still with you, and wars against the spirit in you. Your foolish feet, hands, and tongue continue to offend God, and cause pain in others.
- Temptation to sin – to be intoxicated by the allurements of this corrupted world.
- Distress and despair that you even have such desires.
- Frustration with your loved ones, including deep, longstanding bitterness.
- Pain of heart, and difficulty of conscience, because you know a certain amount of your frustration with loved ones arises from your own proud, petty, malicious, envious heart.
- Wrestling with discontentment about your life circumstances.

- Pain and sorrow of body and mind - loss of health.
- Pain and sorrow at the thought that your pain, sorrow, and loss of health is brought on by your own hand.
- Wrestling with the accusations of Satan against you.
- Suffering in your circumstances directly brought on by your profession of faith.
- Distress of heart that you ever suffer for any other reason than your profession of faith.
- Frustration, anger, and despair that you don't seem to learn a lesson for good. You think you've conquered some sin, and then slam right back into it.
- Distress at your forgetfulness, and inability to fully comprehend your Lord and His command; at your bumbling inability to parse and apply the scriptures as you desire to.

My friends, when the Lord has brought our souls and circumstances into these, and many other trials, our hearts are consumed by the trial. We will not be able to out-think it. We will not be able to stoically hope that it will pass. We will not be able to fool the master craftsman into believing that we have been refined and purified. Our only option is to submit beneath the mighty hand of God - bring our thoughts into captivity and give glory to Him. Get the words of God in front of our eyes and hold fast to them; actively, violently push away the solutions devised by our own heart. Otherwise, we are in grave danger of failing the test!

**Matthew 13:5** *"5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ...*

*20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."*

**Hebrews 4:11-16** *"11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

- The refiner's fire can be difficult, painful, perilous, terrifying, etc., but it is not strange or unexpected – it is the very place that every single soul that belongs to God must be brought.
  - **1Peter 4:12-13** “12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”
  - Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the prophets, the apostles, the many disciples of the New Testament – all were brought into the furnace. By the grace and working of our God, the faith of each of those souls came shining forth from that fire.
  - It is in these moments that we are caused to truly know – deep in our souls – what manner of creatures we are. It is here that Job is brought to put his hand upon His mouth, save to glorify God and ask that **His** will be done. He first spoke of God with many true and right words, but with wrestled with a spirit of chafing, self justification, and self-pity. In these crucial moments of trial, when the Lord shows us who we are, and who He is, the lofty edifice of righteousness that every one of us perceives in ourselves crumbles like a house of cards. It is then that our souls can lie quietly before Him, and truly say: let thy will be done, and not mine.
    - **Psalms 46:10,11** “10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”
  - It is in these moments that we come to understand the election of God's people. The more we are brought to a sense of our own vile nature and helplessness, the more we understand that we cannot have earned the favor of God **in any way**. We see clearly that we are called by grace, “that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (Romans 9:11) In weakness, we are made strong. We are brought to experientially believe this in our hearts – warp and woof – and not just in our minds.
- The refiner's fire is violent to our flesh, separating the precious from the vile, but the one thing it does not separate us from is the love of God. These afflictions that make us apt to despair are the very means that will ultimately enliven our hope. In moments of great trial, our hearts and our Adversary will accuse us like at no other time, but fear not, because our God changes not. His love toward us is not fickle. He is not like man that he should lie or repent of His purpose. “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (**Malachi 3:6**)

**1Corinthians 10:13,14** “13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

**Spurgeon:** “Every man in the world has a measure of trial for, “we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” but there is a distinction between the sorrows of the wicked and the trials of the righteous—a very grave distinction between the punishments of the ungodly and the chastisements of them that fear God. There is a furnace for each metal, but the more precious the ore, the more special the refining. There is a special fire, a reserved furnace into which neither the great ones of the earth nor the wealthy ones shall ever be placed. It is kept for more precious material than the unregenerate children of men. God’s furnace in Zion is especially meant for His own people. Of each of these right royal jewels He says, “I have refined you, not with the precious things of earth—the kings and princes, the silver ones among mortals, but I have refined you in a different manner and thus I make My election to be visible, even in connection with the furnace in which I refine My treasures.” The Lord has special dealings with each one of His saints and refines each one by a process peculiar to the individual, He does not heap all His precious metals into one furnace of silver, but refines each metal by itself. You do not know my trials, I am glad you do not, and neither do I know yours, nor do I wish to bear that which you may have to suffer. There is a common sympathy, for we all go into the furnace, but there is a distinction in the case of each one, for to each one the furnace differs. Some tender hearts would be utterly crushed if they were afflicted as others are. Does not even the farmer teach us this? He does not beat out the tender cumin and fennel with the cartwheel which he turns upon the heavier grain. No, he has different modes of operating upon the different kinds of seeds. They must all be thrashed, but not all thrashed in the same way. You, brother, may be as a sheaf of the best corn. Be grateful, but remember you shall feel the sharp thrashing instrument having teeth. And you, my brother, may be one of the tender seeds, the minor seeds of the Master’s granary. Be grateful, for you shall feel a lighter flail than some others, but do not compliment yourself upon it, for you might regret that gentler flail because it proves that you are of lighter stuff, although still true grain, of the Master’s sowing. Beloved, I would venture to go so far as to say that the lines have not fallen to any two men in precisely the same places. You and I may travel in lines almost parallel, and we may therefore know each other’s griefs, and tenderly sympathize, but there is a turning in my life which you have never reached, and there is a dark corner in your life which I have never seen.”

**James 1:2-4,12** “2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. ... 12 Blessed is the man

*that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."*

It is a hallmark of God's elect that we must pass through the furnace to be fashioned as one our Father's precious jewels. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* (Hebrews 12:6) Consider the value that we hold to God – value created by the righteous blood of our Lord – such that He would go to such diligent lengths to refine us. The fire is not set to consume us, but to separate the precious from the vile, conforming his adopted children to His Son. This is the appointed path – without our cross, we will not have our crown. I will leave you with this image to joyfully consider: when the precious metal is fully purified, it is gleaming and shining, such that the craftsman sees his own reflection in his work. What a joyful thought, that God would finish His work with each of His little ones, and behold himself imprinted on that favored soul.

I love you all. Amen.