

The refining of faith (Quality: Average)

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Preacher: Salkeld H (1898 - 1995)

- [0 : 00] Would you kindly turn again to the book of Job, the 28th chapter that we have read together, Job chapter 28.
- And as the Lord may mercy help, may we consider the first verse, verse 1, in the 28th chapter of the book of Job.
- Surely there is a vein for the silver and a place for gold where they find it.
- Surely there is a vein for silver and a place for gold where they find it.
- The vein for the silver, of course, is rendered also a mine. Surely there is a mine for silver.
- [1 : 12] And of course silver and gold as precious materials, metals, are found deep down in the bowels of the earth, as we know.
- And the whole of this chapter, I think you would agree, is one that you might well find in the book of Proverbs.
- You notice how frequently the book of Proverbs is mentioned in the margin as a reference.
- And of course the main subject of this chapter is wisdom. That is true wisdom. And Job says, First, you see, where shall we find or discover that real wisdom?
- And at the very end of the chapter, he is brought to this conclusion. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord.
- [2 : 52] That is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding. I gather that tells us that the highest wisdom, the greatest understanding, is to be found in a poor sinner's heart, wherever God has implanted his holy fear.
- The fear of God, which, as Solomon says, is the very beginning of wisdom. Well, may the Lord help us for a little while.
- Just to notice first, the figure that Solomon uses here in this verse. Not only of that wisdom, which he speaks of later, but of the real value, the vital treasures, which are in God's mighty hand to give and to bestow.
- Now he says, Surely there is a place, a mine, where this precious metal is found and discovered.
- And also, not only of that, but there is a place for gold, which is in more precious still. But it is a place where that gold is refined and made free from any impurity whatsoever.
- [4 : 33] So that the silver and gold are here set before us as precious things. Valuable beyond all other things.
- And, you know, the Word of God surely tells us from this figure that there is something even more precious still.
- And that is his own mighty work and work of grace in a sinner's heart. And it is that precious faith, which is his gift, and it is called the precious faith.
- And I can't help feeling that the gold and the silver here are a setting for those vital things that God is pleased to give.

And that only he can give. You know, we sometimes sing, it's in our hymn book, I believe, in regard to living faith.

[5 : 48] That faith is a precious grace. That is, it's above value. It cannot be reckoned up in value.

Faith is a precious grace. And he goes on to say that it lies in the heart of a soul. Deep in the heart it lies.

And that it lives and labours under love, though damp, it never dies. And so, here, I believe in these figures set before us by Job, are the vital saving things of God.

And it is by faith, isn't it, that we understand anything. It's faith, God-given faith, that enables you and me to apprehend what we are, see ourselves as we truly are before God.

And it is by that God-given faith, faith in him, in Jesus Christ, the sinner's friend, that we are brought to our knees and into the dust of self-aborrence before God.

[7 : 17] So that silver and gold here, if they do, and I feel sure they do, set forth the more precious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, then how desirable is this?

And if it's your desire and mine, beloved friends, to be possessed of that living faith, faith in the bleeding Lamb.

Oh, what a gift is this? Hope of salvation in his name. How comfortable it is.

Well then, you notice the two figures here. First there is silver and gold. And Job tells us that the silver is found and discovered deep down in its vein or mine.

And also that in regard to gold, that precious and even more precious metal, that its preciousness is found not only in itself.

[8 : 38] That's a point, isn't it, here, that gold is precious in itself, even when it's discovered. But it's more precious still when it is refined and when the impurities are taken away.

And you notice, I think it's in the 19th Psalm, if I remember rightly, where the psalmist speaks of this in his own particular way.

And in verses 9 and 10, he says, The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. These things are the graces of God.

And then he goes on to say, More to be desired are they, these things, than gold, yea, than much fine gold.

[9 : 52] There is gold and there is the fine gold. The fine gold is that which is tried in the fire, put to the test, and where, under God, it is refined and brought to full maturity.

Surely, there is a vein for silver and a place for gold where they find it. And, you know, I can't help feeling that dear Job himself was in the process when he actually wrote these words in process of this very thing himself.

Surely, there can be no doubt in regard to him, Job, that he was a possessor of that precious faith. And, it's very noticeable in the very opening part, the beginning of this remarkable book, we read, there was a man in the land of ours whose name was Job.

And that man was perfect and upright and one that feared God and eschewed evil. That's his character.

Of course, some might say, well, how could he have been perfect and upright? Job was a poor sinner like you and me, yes, and Job was brought to know it and to feel it and to realise that it was indeed true.

[11 : 48] But, he was perfect in this sense that he was brought to cast his hope in a precious Christ, in his Redeemer God.

And, he was brought to that point when he could say, for I know that my Redeemer, Levitt, I need a Redeemer. I'm nothing but a vile sinner.

Oh, how I need one, a perfect one, to redeem my soul from hell and to save my soul from eternal death and condemnation.

Ah, his perfection was in his Saviour, wasn't it? All Job's perfection, his maturity, his uprightness, was all in Christ and in him crucified so that he could say, he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, this body, yes, it'll turn to dust.

It was dust and it'll go back to dust. And, he says, yet in my flesh shall I see God God. Oh, what a wonderful hope.

[13 : 18] The Christian's hope that shall never fail. And it's something, isn't it, to covet. You know, we've been to covet earnestly the best gifts.

We would humbly hope that you and I have that grace given to covet these things. And though we may sometimes deplore the fact that we feel we've missed them, we feel we shall never reach them, and yet, you see, that very fear is something that the Lord will bless and answer those inward desires.

what a wonderful mercy, dear friends, to have an inward desire after Christ. Those feeble desires, one says, those wishes, so weak, yet is Jesus inspired and bids us still see.

So, there was Job, one that feared God. here is one, you see, who displayed the fear of God in his heart and eschewed evil.

Well, he says here, and this is, you see, toward the latter part of Job's particular affliction and trial, surely there is a blame for silver and a place for gold where they find it.

[15 : 02] Now, Job's place for that particular work was here in this experience he was passing through. This was the place, wasn't it, appointed by God where that precious faith wants to be refined, where Job's grace, God-given grace, should be put into the furnace and he should be there tried as gold.

And so he was and Job said, in one place here we read, he said, I believe the Lord will bring me out of it that when he hath tried me, when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

So, it's clear, Job recognized in the midst of his trouble and affliction that the Lord was doing something with him and causing him to pass through a fiery trial of thermos affliction.

you know, it's wonderful how Scripture agrees with Scripture, isn't it? Yeah, there's no contradiction, is there, anyway, in the Word of God from one part to another.

So, you find the Apostle Peter writing to the disciples in his day and he wrote there in one of those epistles, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you.

[17 : 04] The fiery trial which is to try you, which is appointed so to do, which thy God has design and purpose for the good of thy soul.

Ah, how differently we view these things naturally, don't we? I've often thought of poor David the psalmist, one's mind has often gone back to that expression he used find it in one of the psalms when I believe he must have been in some peculiar trouble and distress for probably when Absalom his beloved son turned against his father tried to usurp the throne of Israel and it was then that David uttered those words very poignant sort of expression it is oh that I have wings like a dove then would I fly away and be at rest have you ever felt like that dear friend oh you say

I have more than once too so you have a little communion then fellowship with David there oh that I have wings like a dove then he said I'd fly away or I'd get right out of it I'd escape I'd hasten my escape he said from the stormy wind and tempest of course some would say well isn't that a natural feeling when you're in a position such as David was you want to flee from him that's our natural feeling but you see it was so with Job he would have gladly fled from this trial and yet it was the place and surely Job had to realise it the place for where for that gold where it was to be made fine gold and when you think of it gold and fine gold precious faith more precious faith the faith that

God has given to you and me we humbly hope which is made stronger and more blessed under the trial of it that we desire we might escape from and get the very thing which under God's hand is doing you and me good and becoming profitable people if only we could see it so of course we don't at the time do we Job didn't certainly didn't but at last you see eventually he did and I like to feel that this is what Job was brought to finally and eventually by the good hand of God well right at the end in the last chapter and you know it tells us in the inspired

New Testament it was better with Job at the end than the beginning well this is where he was brought he says here I beseech thee and I will speak for Job speaking back to God I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear but now mine eyes seeth thee wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes self abhorrence godly fear humility and love all are these the things which a gracious God under the refining process of his sovereign wisdom and goodness brings to pass self abhorrence

[21 : 56] God given humility and the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart now you say well I hope I would what a blessed state what favours are these that God gives to his needy people and how do they come to pass well as they did with Joe finally you see he says wherefore now Lord I'm full of self abhorrence now dear Lord I've nothing more to say now my mouth is shut and I would lay in the dust before thee and beg thee to be merciful I repent in dust and ashes oh what a gracious place to be found and if it's a place you would covet dear friend then remember it's the place for gold where they find it where the master of all things deals with his dear people as he will according to his sovereign will and purposes through life's journey in their varying circumstances you know we sometimes speak don't we of those circumstances over which we have no control maybe we didn't always see it so we thought we were in charge at one time we thought didn't we some of us did that we had were fully aware and able we had plenty of ability to guide our steps aright we had to learn otherwise as

Job did and under that refining hand of our God all if you and I brought there where he was finally to submit before him in dust and in ashes well then surely there is a vein for silver and a place for gold where they find it I would here as the Lord might help notice one of the other Old Testament characters that fits in wonderfully in this particular matter and that is Abraham I was thinking of Godly Abraham only the other day and how you know it is said of him that he was a man of much faith all the faith of

Godly Abraham strong in faith giving glory to God and it is said that when in old age you know the Lord promised him a son and that from that son should arise a seed that should honour and glorify God and through which should come in the order of the flesh even Jesus Christ the Saviour God and you know it said of Abraham that when the Lord promised this him and Sarah when they were past stage that he staggered not at the promise God that precious faith God given to Abraham believed he believed God against hope he believed in hope what a favour to be given that grace to be able to trust in a gracious

God even against all appearances and that's how it was with Abraham wasn't it yet everything seemed to deny it how could it possibly be how can these things be but his faith stood firm and it as though Abraham said God my God is able to do beyond and above all that I ask or think and therefore I dare not deny it I must believe I do believe it that he will do that not only he is able to do but that he will do what he is saying now dear friends we're bit to covet honestly the best gifts aren't we is that something that you would earnestly covet a faith like Abraham you say how different my faith is feeble

Lord I must confess I faintly trust thy word but wilt thou pity me the less be that far from thee Lord you know looking back over life's journey and sometimes one has felt perhaps that is one of the blessings of old age when it's sanctified by the grace of God for when you can look back over many many years of the past seek to remember all the way the Lord thy God has led thee of me in the wilderness and then to recognize that at times when we were completely cast down and ready to faint and concluding at the hand of God and surely got out against us because of our vileness and unworthiness yet it was then that the

[28 : 34] Lord appeared and our gracious God used such an experience to the good of our souls so that our darkest time became the period of a blessing no it was so with Abraham you know most wonderfully wasn't it for when that son Isaac grew up into vigorous youth and Isaac must have been a very pleasing young man to look upon and then God says to him take now thy son thine only son Isaac and offer him up on a mountain that I will tell thee of and you know I was singing of that the other day and those lines sweet lines of a hymn we sometimes used to sing seem to flow in if thou shouldst call me to resign what most

I pried it now were mine I only give thee that is thine thy will be done now I believe Abraham was there God called him to resign what he pries most highly the son of promise oh how could he give him up and you know that record as they journeyed together to Mount Moriah and Isaac carrying the wood and so on then Isaac curious as a young man might well be father my father he said it must have gone right into the heart of Abraham that cry my father here is the wood and so on but where is the land for a burnt offering my son

God will provide himself a land for a burnt offering that's the answer and that was the answer you know of God given faith wasn't it must have been God will provide Abraham saw his dear son Isaac laying dead on the altar on Mount Moriah slain by his own hand and yet we really believe that faith was strong enough still to believe that God was able to raise up that dear son again man surely there is a vein for silver yes deep down in the heart it lies and that precious faith it's something you see that it's precious because it's of God I come to feeling that

God given faith is precious in a double sense not only because its source is from God himself and that it must live and that it is as God but its object the object of that faith is God's dear son isn't it to him the hymn says to him Jesus it leads the soul when plunged in deep distress flies to the fountain of his blood trusts his righteousness all doubly precious then is precious faith its gold its fine gold now it was to be seen then in Abraham's case I was thinking then in that chapter in Genesis how it's given so clearly chapter 22

I think that's it it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham but God doesn't tempt his dear people does he not in the way of tempting to sin but he puts them to the test he tries that faith faith must be tried mustn't it because if it's never tried it's never clearly known that it is real faith and the reality of it shows under the trial so it was here and said to Abraham Abraham and he said behold here I am he said take now thy son thine only son Isaac who now loveth get thee into the land of Moriah offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee all well then we read at the end of that trial and

[34 : 08] Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh that's the name he gave to it the place of his greatest trial Jehovah Jireh the Lord will provide as it is said to this day in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen what a wonderful word dear friend that here at this we might say this great severe extremity of trial and affliction yet there it shall be seen God's mercy shall be seen the Lord's wondrous way of salvation shall be seen the Lord's way of deliverance of substitution yes and so the goat that was caught in the thicket the ram caught in the thicket by his horns was taken and offered up in the place of his son now you know these things they no doubt come home to some of us in different ways but it has seemed to me that as we see it in Abraham very clearly but not in him alone by any means but you see

Mount Moriah that place where Abraham's soul spirit and heart were torn almost to pieces under the strain of it yet it became a place of blessing the place of trial became the place and the spot where he received perhaps the greatest blessing he'd ever had and so he gave it a name ah it's good to remember these times isn't it to look back my soul looks back to see the burdens thou didst bear when hanging on the accursed tree and hopes her guilt was there sometimes we look back to those occasions in life's journey where we hope God did appear where in some trial of extremity the

Lord displayed his wondrous goodness and grace and long suffering mercy and how true it is it's in such times he does display the riches of his grace surely then there is a vein for silver and a place for gold where they find it here then beloved friends taking it personally is your heart and your path in this life first then your poor heart is it the heart that you can say and hope to be able to feel is a broken heart and a contrite heart or to be given contrition before

God to be stripped of all our fancied meekness to approach the dread I am and then to be shown where all meekness lies in his beloved son to see perfection there and there alone holiness there and there alone yes and it's in the heart you know it's deep down it's hidden I like to feel I hope it's not wrong to feel it near the friends a true religion the more true it is the more hidden it is hidden deep within the heart deep in the heart it does lie now you know when it starts you see it's something that goes on within isn't it that nobody sees not even our nearest and dearest know what goes on within isn't that true and yet the Lord knows because you see he's done the work it's his hand

I remember years back now when we were living near Manchester attending a little one of our small pauses there and there was a young man started coming among us a young married man he and his wife quite young in years and my father I will remember seemed to take a special interest in this young man his heart went out to him and walking back from the service one Sunday morning my dear father spoke to him feelingly and quite lovingly friendly and the young man turned to him and said oh I hope you won't be offended dear friend you're much older than

[40 : 27] I am but he said you know the things going on within me I just can't express I can't tell anybody he says I hope you won't take it wrongly I feel it's something I can't speak about and my dear father said yes I hope I know a little of what you be I won't press it I'll leave it it's with God in your soul oh how deep these things are and so it is but the place for gold where they find it and that's an experience isn't it perhaps more than one that we have to be there to know what it really means and when you and I are in this spot and place in a friend there's only one thing to do there and that is to take it to the

Lord in prayer in prayer and I believe that prayer will be Lord help me Lord help me oh save me oh deliver me oh give me strength to bear what e'er thy sovereign will appoint and where it means otherwise Lord help me to bear thy dealings grant me grace to trust and not be afraid a place for gold where gold becomes fine gold where faith becomes precious faith ah the apostle how right he was when he spoke of that precious faith he wrote to those who have obtained thy precious faith with us through

Jesus Christ to those who have obtained it and it may be near friends that sometimes you wonder whether you know anything about it whether you ever have obtained that precious grace well I believe it will be made manifest sooner or later because of course what is of God must go back to God mustn't it what he gives will return to him Solomon says I think it's in the Ecclesiastes you remember it's a wonderful word where he speaks of the rivers all the rivers he says flow into the sea and then he says yet the sea is not full why well the place from whence the rivers come either they return again may we not take it that the place from which precious faith comes must return to the

God who gave it and how does it return why in Christ in prayers in humble beseechings before God in supplications and many a prayer that's how it returns all the waters the grace of God the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ all says the apostle it was abundant very abundant so a place for gold where they find it and think of the refiner who sits watching his refining work watching the work of his own hand looking upon you and I as we pass along life's pathway here below and if you and

I are possessors of that precious gift of living faith then he looks upon it and you'll consider and be mindful of the work of his own hand he cannot and never will be unmindful will he of that and as the refiner he watches to see the fine gold appear and we would humbly hope and trust dear friends that in your case and mine there will be some appearing in due time in his own good time as it was with Job himself then surely it is and will be to the glory the honour of our God so that the things of nature as so often set before us in the scriptures oh how wonderful to see the things of grace appearing from among them and being set before us here as in this way you know just in closing what a comfort at least

[46 : 22] I hope it is it surely should be that with Job you know it was said he lived a long life he suffered perhaps more than any human being has ever suffered in life but it says it was better with him at the end than the beginning and then we read what the Lord did for Job how he granted him an abundant blessing well may the Lord grant it to be your portion and mine may he pardon all that has been amiss and grant his blessing upon his own word for his name's sake amen to ■ met