Thanks – The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving!

Simon Peter began his epistle by talking about the living hope we have since Jesus Christ arose from the dead. As a result of Christ's victory, you have been given hope of an inheritance that has been reserved for you in heaven. Not only do we have hope for that inheritance, we have the promise that we are kept by the power of God.

1 Peter 1:6-7a NKJV In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, These trials are only to test your faith, to see whether or not it is strong and pure.

1 Peter 1:7b LB It is being tested as fire tests gold and purifies it—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold; so if your faith remains strong after being tried in the test tube of fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day of His return.

Peter is telling us that in this season of life, you can expect manifold temptations. The word used for "*temptation"* means "proving, examining, testing with difficulties and adversities." The afflictions and difficulties you face are putting your faith to the test. If you are following Jesus Christ, you are going to go through many heavy trials and temptations. Your faith will be tested!"

God is telling you: *"Your faith is as precious to Me as gold." **He is saying:*** "*In the last days the enemy will send all manner of evil against you. I want you to be able to stand strong, with an unshakeable faith*."

Strong faith is produced through great testing.

Just like precious metal, you must be tried by fire. Good news is those fiery trials only last for a season. You will wonder if your prayer is being heard. You will go through times of heaviness, sadness, grief, and despair. At times you'll be tempted to give up.

God is telling you: *"I will keep you and bless you through every dark day!" "Your part is simply to have faith in Me." "You will be kept by My power, through faith!"*

In *1 Peter 1:4-5* "...you are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

These fiery tests of your faith are important. In the fire, God's keeping and delivering power is revealed by our faith in Him. The stronger your faith, the more His keeping power will be realized in your lives.

Paul spoke about heavy adversities and testing.

In Acts 20:19, he said he was "serving the Lord... with many tears, and

temptations…" This is the same word Peter used for “temptations.” It means, *“adversities that examine, try and prove.”* **Paul was saying:** *“In everything I go through, the Lord is trying to mold something in me. He wants to bring out enduring faith!”*

James spoke about the same thing.

James 1:2–3 NKJV My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

James was not talking about temptations to do evil. He used the same word that Peter and Paul used. James was saying, “Whenever heavy trials come upon you, rejoice!” “You can be confident that God is working in you, to build you up. He is bringing you to a place of rest and faith in Him!”

There is a way out of your time of great testing!

2 Peter 2:9 NKJV The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.

This is the same word for “temptation.” This is a time to examine, try, and prove your faith.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Sometimes you need to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to God!

God does not want you to remain in the time of testing and trial.

He does not get any glory from testing His children. The glory comes when the test ends. There is only ONE WAY to escape our trials.

When you were in school, how did you finally escape the testing?

You had to pass the final exam. If you didn't pass, you were sent back to class.

That was what happened with Israel when God brought them to the Red Sea.

God was testing, trying, and proving His people. He brought them to the very brink of destruction. They were surrounded by mountains on two sides, the sea on another, and an approaching enemy on the other.

James used the phrase, *“fall into various trials,”* (James 1:2). The phrase means, *“being lowered into a pit and surrounded by enemies.”*

This is what happened with Israel. God dropped them into a literal pit. It

was a humanly impossible situation! When the Lord brought Israel into that situation, He was expecting a certain reaction. He expected His people to have faith that God would deliver them. The LORD was listening to hear them say, “God delivered us from the plagues and brought us out of the furnace of affliction.” “When death came upon the land none of our children were touched.” “Since God delivered us then, He will do it again!” “Let us rejoice in His faithfulness.” “God has given promises that He will keep us and He will protect us from every enemy that comes against us.”

How could God expect Israel to have that kind of reaction?

They were only weak humans that were in a hopeless situation. Were they really supposed to rejoice in the middle of those circumstances? The sacrifices of thanksgiving is the secret to getting out of their difficulty.

God wants us to offer Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving in the middle of the test!

James discovered this secret.

James 1:2 He said: “*count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations*.” He was saying, “*Don't give up on God!”* Make an altar in your heart and offer up joyous thanksgiving in the middle of your trial. Israel did offer God praise and thanksgiving on the wrong side of the Red Sea! The people rejoiced all night but God had no pleasure in it. *Anyone can rejoice after the victory comes.*

God wanted Israel to trust and praise Him while they were in the middle of the battle.

God was waiting for their faith to arise. This happened every time they faced battles, trials, and temptations, but they never offered up faith to God. Their trials became more difficult and intense. They never stopped in the middle of the test to give the Lord a sacrifice of thanksgiving! It is easy to fall into that trap. Often we complain and fail to thank God for what He has done.

We all need to learn the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

What has the LORD done for you? How many times has He spared your life or supplied your need? You don’t know everything He has done for you. In your battle you can find peace and joy by blessing the Lord and giving Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

What is a sacrifice of thanksgiving?

Psalm 107:22 NKJV Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, And declare His works with rejoicing.
Psalm 116:17 NKJV I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the Lord.
Psalm 100:4 NKJV Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

The Psalmist was referring to the annual Day of Atonement in the Old Testament.

It was a tremendous day of celebration when the sins of the previous year were cleansed and atoned. Prior to that day, everyone was burdened down with their sins.

Two young goats were taken to the gate of the tabernacle and presented to the high priest.

One goat was chosen to be the blood sacrifice and the second was designated to be the scapegoat.

- *The first goat was sacrificed on the altar and its blood was collected in a bowl.*

The priest took the blood into the holy of holies where he presented it with incense on the altar. The smoke from the incense filled the holy of holies. He sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat once and in front of it seven times. Outside, every person in the camp lay on their faces throughout the entire sacrificial procedure. No one saw what happened when atonement was made for their sins.

- *The action taken with the second goat* was an illustrated sermon for everyone to see.

When this happened, everyone stood and rejoiced. In the Holy Place, the High Priest changed from his special clothes and put on his regular priestly clothes.

Leviticus 16:21 Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send *it* away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man.

When he laid hands on the scapegoat, He prayed: *"Lord, place my sins and the sins of the people on the head of this goat. Now, depart!"* After he prayed, someone led the scapegoat on a long trip into an uninhabited place in the wilderness from which it could not return.

Leviticus 16:22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a

land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

The phrase *"not inhabited"* means *"an inescapable place."* When the scapegoat was led out of the camp all Israel stood watching, cheering, and rejoicing. Everyone understood that "*Not only were their sins forgiven, they were taken away from them!"* When that goat was led out of the camp, he would never be seen again. The Lord would not remember their sins against them. So, a mighty shout went up from the camp!

This is what Jesus Christ has done for us.

He is the lamb Who was slain, and He is the One who takes and bears away the sins of the world.

Isaiah 53:4 AMP Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains [of punishment]..

Micah 7:19 NKJV You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

This was a time of praise and thanksgiving! Jesus Christ, our High Priest has made atonement for our sins and has wiped out all our transgressions, never to be remembered against us. The work of atonement is finished and we rejoice with thanksgiving and praise. We don't have to bring sacrifices of blood or offerings of silver and gold for atonement to God, instead we bring the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving from our lips.

Hebrews 13:15 NKJV Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

The "fruit of our lips" is our gratitude and thanks!

The prophet Jonah gave us an excellent example of the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

He was in the depths of the sea and the billows and waves passed over him. In Jonah 2:5 he said, "the waters surrounded me, the deep closed around me and weeds were wrapped around my head." He said, *'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'* In the belly of a great fish, Jonah hit rock bottom and in a battle for his life, he was filled with despair, shame, and guilt. He was literally as low as a person could get and thought God had abandoned him.

How did Jonah get out of his pit?

Jonah 2:7, 9 NKJV "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD... I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving"

In the depths of a hopeless situation, when everything was dark and gloomy and his soul fainted within him, Jonah entered into the Lord's presence with praise and thanksgiving!

When Jonah did that, the Lord "spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land" (Jonah 2:10).

God knows how to deliver His people out of all of their troubles.

In one word, God delivered Jonah onto the shore.

Philippians 4:6 says "...in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Are you going through a hard time right now? Are you facing a situation you can do nothing about? Are you weighted down with heaviness, sorrow, and stress? Do you feel you just can't go on?

God has not abandoned you. He knows you will need great faith to overcome the dark times ahead. You need to be able to stand by faith alone. When you have no place to turn, turn to God with thanksgiving.

- Thank God for His forgiveness from all past sins.
- Thank Him for delivering you from your troubles.
- Thank Him for giving you a new home in glory.
- Thank Him for all His blessings and promises.
- In everything, give thanks!