

We learned last week that God has delivered "the faith" once for all (Jude 3). We need to learn about it, hold on to it, and build our lives upon it so that "the faith" becomes *my* faith and *your* faith. God is able and willing to help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pet 3:18) so that we become "firm" in faith (1 Pet 5:9). We're going to need it! So how? *How* does God help us grow? One way is the **testing** of our faith. Listen to what James wrote in 1:2-3:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet _____ of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces...

Somehow, somehow, God can make good things come from the testing of my faith. Tests or exams can help us grow in our understanding of a subject in school. Weightlifting can help us grow in physical strength. Running can help us grow in physical endurance. And the testing of faith can help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Listen to how Peter put it in 1 Peter 1:3-7:

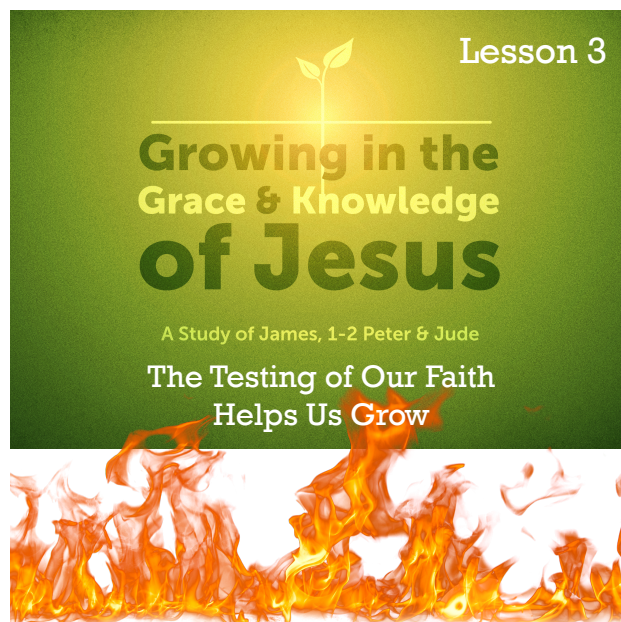
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being _____ through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the _____ genuineness of your _____—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter even encourages us, "do not be surprised" when fiery trials come as tests (1 Pet 4:12-18). The testing of our faith is going to be part of life. But here's what we need to remember when those tests come:

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will _____ their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Pet 4:19)

God is worthy of our trust, even when we are being tested. **Why?** Jude offers at least one answer: God is able to "keep" us "from _____" (Jude 24-25). You stumbled a lot when you were learning to walk, right? Why don't you stumble as much now? Because you've grown. You've gotten stronger and more "steadfast." Listen. That's the difference for good trials can make in our lives...

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces _____. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and _____, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-3)



For Class & Family Discussion:

- ▶ Let's think about it and discuss together: how can my faith and your faith be "tested" today? What "various kinds" of "trials" might we meet this week (James 1:2-3)?
- ▶ Can you think of any examples from the Bible of men or women who had their faith seriously tested? What effect did it have on their lives?
- ▶ Peter described "the tested genuineness" of faith that is proven to be "more precious than gold" through "various trials" (1 Pet 1:6-7). In everyday terms, how can trials and tests reveal faith as "genuine"?
- ▶ Is genuine faith *really* "more precious than gold" (1 Pet 1:7)? If so, in what ways?
- ▶ Why do you think Peter wrote what he did in 1 Peter 4:12?
- ▶ Why the warning in 1 Peter 4:15?
- ▶ What's it going to look like to really practice and live 1 Peter 4:19?
- ▶ Coming back to James 1:3, what is "steadfastness"? How can the testing of my faith "produce" steadfastness?
- ▶ "And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:3). What does this mean?
- ▶ So *how* can we "count it all joy" when our faith is tested (James 1:2)? What is that going to look like and sound like?