

# *Standing in the Fire*



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5<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

PROVISIONHEIRZ

## **Standing in the Fire**

### **Introduction**

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## Standing in the Fire

### *Introduction*

What is life's primary purpose and motivation?

What factors sustain the faithful in times of hardship?

How does sanctification by faith in grace, provide patience and hope for today and tomorrow?

The answers to these questions are found within Christ who is the **Foundation**; the **Faithful**; and the **Life**.



### *I.*

Christ is the foundation of all that we are: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:3-6).

What a wonderful Savior!

**His Mercy Has Made Me His Own**

Unworthy, unworthy, a beggar;

In bondage and alone;

But He made me worthy and now by His grace,

His mercy has made me His own.

My sorrow and sickness laid stripes on His back,

My sins caused the blood that was shed;

My faults and my failures have woven a crown

Of thorns, that He wore on His head.

Unworthy am I of the grace that He gave,

Unworthy to hold to His hand;

Amazed that a King would reach down to a slave,

This love I cannot understand.

Unworthy, unworthy, a beggar;

In bondage and alone;

But He made me worthy and now by His grace,

His mercy has made me His own. (Darrell Creswell, 2012)

God is the foundation of all that we joy in. “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10, 11).

Christ is the foundation of all that we will be.” Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory...” (John 17:24).

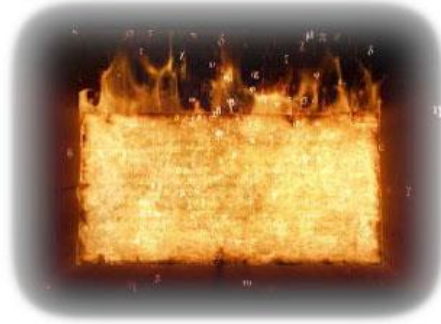
“Standing on the promises that cannot fail;  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail.  
By the living word of God I shall prevail;  
Standing on the promises of God.”

“Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord;  
Bound to him eternally by love’s strong cord.  
Overcoming daily with the Spirit’s sword;  
Standing on the promises of God.” (R. Kelso Carter, 1928)

Trusting is being confident in what we hope for, and being convinced about things that we don’t see (Heb. 11:1). If someone speaks, let him speak God's words; if someone serves, let him do so out of strength that God supplies; so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus (1 Peter 4:11). Instead of saying: “God bless my agenda and plan,” we must pray: “show me your will and plan Lord.” Blessings then come with obedience. Our motive must be to please God and to follow his will, not just to look for blessings. To glorify self is total vanity: “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 1:14). By the sacrifice of Jesus, we are now considered righteous, and are through him delivered from the angry judgment of God (Rom. 5:9).

To reject the word of God inevitably leads to apostasy and moral disintegration. Doing things ‘our own way’ simply dismisses the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The prophet Jeremiah had written that “the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them: that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin” (Jer. 36:3).

When the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, heard the words from the scroll he cut it up (Jer. 36:23) and “cast it into the fire.” “...yet they were not afraid” (Vs. 24). This rebellion led to the Babylonian captivity of Judah in 605 B.C.



During the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem, the gold was taken from the temple and used later to make the “image” of Daniel 3:1 (Jer. 52:17-26). Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were the Babylonian names of the three Hebrew men who were thrown into the fire because they refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image made from this gold (Daniel 3). This was an obelisk 9 feet wide and 90 feet tall. The Babylonians worshiped gods such as the god of the moon (Aku) and the god of wisdom (Nebo). Shadrach meant: “command of moon god.” Meshach meant: “who is what Aku is?” Abed-nego meant: “servant of Nebo.” These men may have been given pagan names, but their hearts were still devoted to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the true and living God, **YHWH**. They had not forgotten their God nor their true names: Hananiah which means (YAHWEH is gracious); Mishael: (Who is like God); Azariah: (YAHWEH has helped).

All the people worshiped the image because they feared the fire (Dan. 3:7). The three faithful testified that “our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand O king....” When they were thrown in, they stood in the fire and were not burned. The king saw that they lived and were with a “fourth” man “like the Son of God.” By the king’s own witness and testimony, he said: “there is no other god that can deliver after this sort.” We, like the Hebrew faithful, may stand in the fire of affliction. When the fourth man is there then God’s covenant will be confirmed. “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 26:15).

The fire they were thrown into was so intense that “the flame of the fire slew those men that took (them) up” (Dan. 3:22). The fire burned away their bindings but not them nor their clothes. They didn’t even smell of smoke (vs. 27). They stood in the fire, but not alone. The fourth man in the fire was none other than Jesus Christ. This is the living testimony to the child of God that “there is no other God that can deliver after this sort” (vs. 29).



The three-faithful stood on the solid rock of salvation. This commitment involves stripping off the old nature, because the old nature is thoroughly rotted by its deceptive desires (Eph. 4:22). The Holy Spirit teaches how to manage life in a holy and honorable manner, not as those who “do not know God” (1 Thess. 4:4, 5). God's power has given everything we need for life and godliness, through knowing the One who called us to his own glory and goodness. The great promises he has given enable one to share in God's nature and escape the evil desires of this world (2 Pet. 1:3, 4). “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8).

Our spiritual fathers drank from the same spiritual rock that we do, and that rock is Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4). Christ is that solid rock (Mat. 7:24), cornerstone (Eph. 2:20) and foundation (1 Cor. 3:11) which stands eternally. Christ is, was, and ever shall be (Matt. 18:20; Jn. 1:1, 2, 15; 8:58). God is this foundation in whom we are, joy in, and ever will be (Eph. 1:5; Luke 2:10; Jn. 17:26). We were made to glorify God.

The spirit of God dwells within us (I Cor. 3:16). God has given man free will to choose or reject God. When man chooses God, he digs deep to establish the solid rock foundation upon which to build his life (Luke 6:48).

## *II.*

This conversion or new-birth, transforms the individual from self-centered to God-centered. To glorify the creator is the fulfilment and purpose of man's existence, the futile attempt to satisfy self and the carnal nature, will never bring joy and lasting happiness (Eph. 1:3-5). Upon the foundation of self is built the house of evil and death. Upon the foundation of Christ is built the house of righteousness and life. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "These things" include provision and strength to accomplish the kingdom's work. Faith may be described as receiving God and being satisfied with all that he is and has promised to be; trusting in our calling and his will, and acting upon it. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

The Holy Spirit enables obedience through faith. As a pagan from Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham followed the call of God and became the father of a nation and covenant founder. Moses, Noah and the patriarchs of the Bible, took the step in faith yet suffered persecution and rejection. This faithful obedience led to hardships and affliction, but the promises of God were fulfilled. Obedience to the Holy Spirit always results in fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

God does not yield his glory to anyone else. The children of God may be tested in the furnace of affliction, which is ultimately for his praise and glory (Isaiah 48:9-11). The men of faith in Babylon were willing to be burned to death in the furnace, rather than deny their God (Dan. 3). They were thrown into the fire, willing to sacrifice their lives, refusing to bow down to the gods of the Babylonians.

In times of seeming helplessness and despair, within the fires of opposition (Jn. 15:18; 3:20), one may "stand still and see the salvation of the LORD" (Ex. 14:13; II Chron. 20:17). The Christ-centered life is eternal and glories in the presence of the spirit of God. God's love to man is that which glorifies God.



We often testify that God “will never leave us nor forsake us.” “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deu. 31:6).

How is God glorified when suffering and hardship occur?

Where is the love of God when the innocent die?

Where was God when millions were executed or thrown into the ovens of the holocaust?

Where is the caring and concern of God when children are enslaved or dying of starvation?

(Mark 4:38) "Carest thou not that we perish?" The disciples were asking Jesus: "Doesn't it matter to you that we are about to be killed?" In the face of possible death, this question was asked to the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the one who suffered, bled, and died for all. He cared enough to suffer the pains, afflictions and temptations of every kind (Heb. 4:15, 16). He is touched by the "feelings of our infirmities." He rebuked the wind and said unto the sea "Peace be still" He said simply, "How are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40; Jn. 20:27)



At Pentecost the Holy Spirit of God filled these same fearful disciples with a boldness that transcended the fear of persecution and death. They were now empowered with a faith and belief that overcame fear, death and the grave. These who had hidden in fear, were now preaching and teaching openly.

The fact of eternal life has been demonstrated in the resurrection. They, as Paul, could now profess: “According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death. For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” (Phil. 1:20, 21).

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.” (Ps.22:1-5).

In all of the calamity that had fallen upon Job, he cries out in anger, cursing the day he was born (Job 3:3). Job thinks God has abandoned him. However, rather than cursing God and dying, Job declares: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also *shall be* my salvation...” (Job 13:15, 16). Job was exercising his free will to choose, and he chose to trust in God. God’s provision offers free will to all, demonstrating God’s absolute goodness, righteousness and love. He who “did not spare his own son,” will “give us all things” (Rom. 8:32). The choice is now ours: everlasting death, or everlasting life.



*The ship and the storm*

Lament is not a denial of faith, but a willingness to struggle with unanswered questions by holding on to God in the heart of the storm. Job's complaints and questioning comes out of the seemingly dark spiritual time and lack of understanding of God's nature. God answers these questions with rhetorical questions concerning creation and God's divine sovereignty. Job was being reminded that God is always just and always true. Nothing happens apart from the will and purpose of God! His plans are just, holy and loving, and in time we will understand. God knows what he's doing, and our future is in his loving hands. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34). "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust (Ps. 91:1, 2). "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings" (Ps. 17:8).

Job was beginning to see that God did care and was "touched by the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15, 16). He is the God of love, and our suffering is not beyond his counsel, control or purpose. The cross is the proof of how personally, affectionately, and committed to our welfare our heavenly Father actually is. God forsook his own son so that we would not be forsaken (Matt. 27:46). The heart-purifying effect of suffering often results in great advances in the spiritual life of the godly.



Under the new covenant, God dwells within the temple of the heart. If we stand in the fire for his sake, he is there with us. God is glorified as the born-again believer takes on the nature of Christ. In death or life, sickness or health, hardship or prosperity, God is glorified. The redeemed are thankful more so for the deliverance from the fire, than for the blessings. God is sovereign overall and glorified in all. Our blessings glorify God, not self.

The sovereignty of God is revealed and fulfilled on the cross of Christ. This propitiation is received by faith, which appeases the wrath of God. We are crucified with Christ, then born-again (Rom. 3:23-25). The old man must die before the new man is born.

God's grace, as demonstrated and fulfilled at the cross of Jesus, forgives all sin. This grace is freely given and when it is not free then it is not grace at all. Grace and justification are freely given, so there is no room for boasting or complaining. The attempt to pay back for the debt Jesus already paid for is impossible. Believers often feel that since God has done so much for them that they need to try to "pay God back". The debt Jesus paid cost too much to pay back. No moral code that we may adhere to will ever pay back for his perfect morality. No religious practice could ever compensate him for his complete relationship with his Father. No financial gift could ever pay for the royalty he laid aside to live on earth. "What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?" "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD" (Ps. 116:12, 13).

The greatest sin ever committed by man was the crucifixion of God's son upon the cross. Jesus said as he hung from the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). If God has forgiven us for that sin, then surely all of our other sins are forgivable upon repentance. What Satan means for evil, God means for good. The three Hebrew men were delivered from the fire that God would be glorified. Joseph was betrayed and sold into slavery by his brothers but later told them: "...ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). We now may stand in faith upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ "that all things (including evil, sickness and suffering) work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).

Christ was faithful in the past by providing the perfect sacrifice. His death, burial and resurrection redeems and freely justifies. To consider the past life of the child of God, one realizes God's intervention, protection and merciful grace that has sustained and redeemed. Our sins would have brought the judgment and wrathful vengeance of God, but Christ "suffered for us" (1 Pet. 2:21). Because we have been forgiven, we must forgive others without spite, bitterness or vengeance.

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19; Is. 53:6; 2 Thess. 2:10). “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:15).

When the believer faces hardship, he often cries out: “I’m trying to live for you!” It is not easy to “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord” when the flames of persecution and suffering are burning all around (Ex. 14:13; 2 Chron. 20:17). The unbelief of impatience murmurs against providence. We often, as did Joseph, find ourselves in the downward spiral of helplessness and despair. God is telling us: “Be patient, I have a plan for you.” After 13 years of slavery, imprisonment and betrayal, Joseph was able to understand God’s plan for his life.

Faith for trust and belief today based on God’s past faithfulness is encouraging but not complete. God’s plan may include suffering without explanation. We trusted God then, and we must trust God now. The faith that unites us to Christ receives justification imputed, and sanctification imparted. These are received because we are in the right position to receive. One may be standing in the pit of despair when this grace comes. It is not upon the mountain top, but in the valley of despair that we turn to the God of our salvation. To make God your greatest and supreme treasure is everlasting joy and peace. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matt. 13:44). “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: Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls” (1 Peter 1:8,9).



As a child growing up on a farm, many spiritual lessons were learned by example. One day we heard a knock at the door. There stood our neighbor covered with mud. He explained that he had been ploughing with his horse when a sink hole opened up, and the horse had fallen in. He needed our tractor to try to pull it out. We tried with chain and tri-pod, but to no avail. Finally, my father said: Let's just fill the hole up with dirt." The first load was dumped into the hole. The horse shook it off and stepped up. After several loads, it was able to step out and walk away.

The tests and trials of life occur for everyone. Those who don't 'shake them off' are buried. To fall without getting back up means defeat and failure. Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times. When Thomas Edison was asked: "How does it feel to have failed two thousand times to create the electric filament?" Edison replied: "I have not failed, not once. I've discovered ten thousand ways that don't work." Deliverance from the pit of hardship and failure eventually arrives as one steps up one hardship at a time. God is the God of new beginnings. He forgives sins and remembers them no more. He restores and renews. He brings life out of death. He gives victory where there seems to be defeat.

"We are more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:35-39) in all these things. "We are killed for thy sake" (Ps. 44:22); blessed be the name of the Lord! Christ enables fellowship and union with him through his atonement. Death is of little consequence when the Life and the Resurrection live within. "For since he himself suffered death when he was put to the test, he is able to help those who are being tested now" (Heb. 2:18). "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Pet. 3:13-17).

Self, no matter how glorious, can never satisfy a heart made from God. One must die to self that God may live within. “Ye must be born again” (Jn. 3:7). The God that lives within, exalts man for his glory (Job 36:22; 7:17; I Pet. 5:6; Ps. 18:35). “I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end...” (Ps. 73:17). Isaiah saw the glory and magnificence of God, and realized his inadequacy and unworthiness (Is. 6:5). The believer must be totally dependent upon the strength and promises of God. “...It is he that hath made us and not we ourselves” (Ps. 100:3).

True power does not come from the self, but total reliance upon the power and promises of God. “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father:” (2 Thes. 1:3). “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Ps. 63:1-3). “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Ps. 42:11). True holiness loves God to the extent that sin loses its power, and relies upon the promises and power of God.

Christ is faithful in grace to be provided in the future. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10). “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). The faithful are future oriented which enables endurance through the sufferings of this present time. How blessed are those who have not seen, but trust anyway (John 20:29). True Israel came by the word of promise: “...for in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12). The word shall stand, not through human effort (Ishmael, son of the bond woman), but through the promise, Isaac (Gen. 18:10).

### *III.*

“Cheap grace” may be defined as the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, the cross, or without Jesus Christ.

The emphasis is on the benefits of Christianity without the costs involved. Prosperity cannot occur without spiritual growth.

Hypocrisy and disobedience occur when sin is ignored, rationalized or its seriousness is minimized. "Sloppy agape" may be defined as a permissive relationship or environment in which people are not held accountable for the consequences of their sin; any teaching that emphasizes God's forgiveness over and above the need for believers to be holy and obedient. This term is sometimes contrasted with tough love.

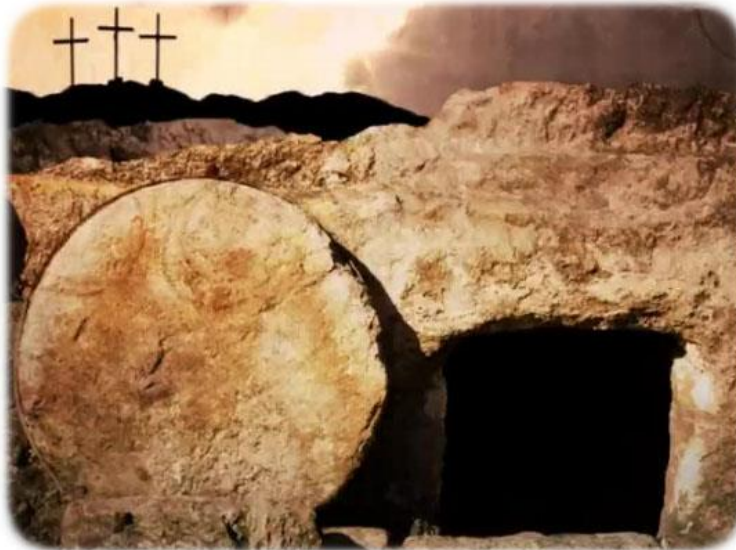
He saves us strictly because of Jesus' sacrifice and not because of anything we do. When we sin, we have God's grace to pull us through and to make us strong again. Grace comes from the identity in Christ that was granted to us so that we actually become the Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. The righteousness that we have received through faith is not something we earn nor have had anything to do with accomplishing as spiritual law in our life. We simply receive through faith. After that there is nothing we can do to become more or less holy because it is finished. Holiness is a life style which directly results from the indwelling Spirit of God.

Grace is the freedom that has been granted to us after the law was fulfilled through Christ. The freedom from the law which demands a perfection that is impossible without grace. However, under grace we are Sons of God, righteous, blameless, sinless (remission of sins), and free from the curse of the sin nature. The true nature of grace helps one to see the finished work of Christ already factual in ones' life. Grace helps one see who they really are in Christ.

The born-again will not continue in sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:9-10). "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). Grace that shows people that their actions do not dictate their identity is empowering, not restricting.



Do we claim that we need to do something to keep our salvation even though Jesus paid for it and we had nothing to do with it? How does one “work out their salvation with fear and trembling?” Justification is the legal standing with God where we are declared righteous in his sight. Faith and belief in Christ releases the power of God to work in our lives (Jn. 6:28, 29). Repentance of sins and submission to the Holy Spirit enable God to re-generate, transform and convert the carnal man into the spiritual man. This new man manifests his new nature which loves God and neighbor and hates sin. These behaviors do not save him, but illustrate who he really is: a man of God! To maintain salvation, we would “imitate Christ” (Eph. 5:1; 22-26), study the word and apply it to our lives (2 Tim. 2:15), and to love one another (Eph. 4:1-5).



Our belief in Christ enables us to stand on the promises of God, receiving the sanctifying power which promotes holiness and radical love. “If a man die, shall he live again?” Job is asking this question to God (Job 14:14) in the midst of extreme hardship. All hope seems to be lost for Job since he has lost everything, except for his life. Jesus answers Job’s question when he raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:43). Resurrection and eternal life is the hope we have in Christ which gives courage to stand in the fires of affliction. “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal.6:8, 9). Paul states that: “when your possessions were seized, you accepted it gladly; since you knew that what you possessed was better and would last forever” (Heb. 10:34).

Jesus teaches to: “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16); and this done in the midst of suffering and hardship.



God is at the foundation of all that we are: (Eph. 1:5); of all that we joy in: (Luke 2:10); and all that we will be: (Jn. 17). Hardships may be considered a gift of God when they are needed to keep one humble and reliant upon God’s strength. Jacob wrestled with God, desiring a blessing. The reason for this encounter was to ensure that Jacob, who became Israel afterward, had the correct motivation, heart, and attitude toward God. It was a lesson in humility, and Jacob responded by a show of faith and longing for God. His resulting limp lasted the rest of his life, as a reminder of his encounter with God. Jacob's life-long policy was to run. His final glory was that he learned to lean (Hebrews 11:21). An injury is a good thing if it is accepted as a stewardship from God; as a channel of God's strength and consecrated to God's purpose. Where dependence on God’s strength is the objective, weakness will be the advantage (2 Cor.12:7-9).

Because of Christ and his redemptive atonement, children of God can receive the eternal inheritance. God has promised and is committed to do what is good for his unworthy people. Through Christ God brings his children all joy in fellowship with himself. “He that began a good work in you, will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). It is God, and not ourselves who will sustain us “to the end” (1 Cor. 1:8, 9; Matt. 6:25-33).

It is God who sanctifies and keeps us blameless (1 Thess. 5:23). Our hope is steadfast and sure. The changed nature is evident in practical holiness, and is necessary for final salvation (Heb. 12:14; James 2:17).

God's everlasting covenant is fulfilled in Christ. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer.32:40). "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24, 25).

Hope and faith in God's promises of our future enables the child of God to endure the hardships of this life. This hope transcends the present sufferings for they pale in comparison with eternal life in heaven. The fact of Christ and his gospel is all the evidence needed to have peace and confidence in this hope. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit assures the believer that God's grace and mercy is sufficient and will endure forever. The born-again have the nature of their heavenly father, who will welcome them with: "well done my good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21). As God's "treasured possession" (Matt. 10:31) we will "judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3); "shine like the sun" (Matt. 13:43); and sit with him "in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

Our prayer today is that his "kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12).

### *Conclusion*

Christ is the foundation of life in every aspect. It is for his glory that we are created, today and forever. Faith in his continuing grace enables the believer to stand within the fires of affliction, anticipating the eternal glory to come.

...and having done all, to stand...

