

All right, if you want to get out your Bibles, we're going to make our way to Zechariah chapter 13 this morning as we continue through the Old Testament.

And as you're making your way there, I'm excited to announce we have baptisms after the service.

Yeah.

These brave souls are going to get into the water that is quickly cooling off.

So as soon as we're done here, we're going to go out to the baptismal beach and baptize people into the body of Christ.

Well, as you're making your way there, let me also let you know that we find ourselves in Zechariah in a time and place in Israel's history of renewal.

In 536 BC, 42,000 Jews, as you may be familiar with, if you've been attending here for any length of time,

They returned, just a small number of those that were deported years earlier.

This 42,000 Jews, the remnant as it's called, returned from Babylon to Israel.

And they had one goal in mind, really, and that was rebuild the temple.

And as we mentioned, they got off to a great start.

They began the year that they arrived, and then they were met with opposition, like it's almost always the case when you do anything for Jesus or for God.

And so the work stalled as soon as it started, and it didn't stall for one year, two years, but as you know, for 16 years.

So in 520 BC, God, His grace had kind of ran out, so He sent two prophets to encourage them.

And

So he sends Haggai.

That guy's very practical.

We studied his book.

He prophesied for about four months.

He didn't have a lot to say other than, hey, you got your priorities all mixed up.

Stop building your own paneled houses and build the house of the Lord.

Let's get the first things first.

And so to soften the blow, maybe a little bit, you'd say he sent Zechariah, who was also called to urge them to rebuild.

But he's more of an encourager now.

Like many encouragers, he's also very long-winded.

And so he takes 14 chapters to say, hey, this thing's bigger than you, and you're not going to accomplish this by your might or your power, but in chapter 4, verse 6, it's by the Spirit of the Lord.

And so in the first six chapters, he gives eight visions, and he pulls back the curtain into the heavenlies so they can understand that this thing that God's called them to is bigger than

And it can only be accomplished by the supernatural.

And then in chapter 7 and 8, he records a question.

The people come with a question about the way they were going about life and religion.

And he kind of backs out and says, look, concerning this question about now, it's important to be faithful now because being faithful now has greater implications than you'll ever know.

You're rebuilding the temple, which is important because that's what God called you to do.

But that temple is going to be the place where long after you're gone, the Messiah is actually going to come walk and he's going to put his very feet on this floor that you're building and walk within these walls.

And so for all of us, the things God calls us to do now, even though it may seem insignificant or hard or overlooked or not so much important as we'd hoped,

We'll never know until eternity, maybe just exactly what being faithful now meant later.

And so that segues then into the last chapters, verses 9 through 14, where the prince is predicted or the Messiah is predicted because that's what this is all about.

And so how the prophets work is they talk about the first and second coming of Christ, but they don't talk about it chronologically.

They don't start and say, here's the first coming, and now here's what it's going to look like at the second coming.

Instead, they throw high and tight.

They throw at your chin.

They throw at your knees.

They bounce one to the plate.

We get chapters 10 and 12, the second coming.

Then chapter 11, back to the first coming.

Then today in chapter 13, we get the first and the second coming all mixed in together and not in chronology.

Not in proper order, you might say.

So that all said then, think about this before we get started, that the Jews, as we mentioned last week, had ignored all of the Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled at Jesus' first coming.

They were looking, as we mentioned, for a conquering king.

We talked about briefly a cascade of failure, where they started with this idea that, that the Messiah had to be a conqueror.

So they just ignored all the scriptures about the Messiah being a suffering servant.

And so when the suffering servant showed up, they missed him altogether.

So they missed the first coming and the good shepherd because they were looking for the second coming and the conquering king.

And so eventually what we were told in Zechariah is they will embrace at or right before Jesus' second coming a very worthless or false shepherd, the Antichrist.

And yet as he ravages them, Israel will finally have the scales from their eyes dropped and they will look upon Jesus, whom they pierced, is what we're told in chapter 12, verses 10 and 11.

And they will mourn for him like someone would mourn for an only son.

And so chapter 13, in that day, verse 1, a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

And in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that day I will cut off the names of the idols from the land and they shall no longer be remembered.

Well, that's uplifting.

When we talk about the day of the Lord in that day, let me remind you that the last days, biblically, start with Jesus' first coming and then they consummate with Jesus' second coming.

And so the day of the Lord, or in that day, constitutes the end of the last days and refers to the time surrounding Christ's second coming.

So chapter 12, as we just mentioned, ends with Israel's eyes open to their Messiah at Jesus' second coming.

That they mourn him.

They see that they've pierced him.

And that mourning then leads to, as we get into chapter 13, a fountain of cleansing for sin and uncleanness.

That's an important distinction to make, that the mourning leads to cleansing.

And I'll refer you to a famous scripture, Matthew 5, verse 3.

Jesus' most famous message, which is the Sermon on the Mount.

He probably gave that message in some form or fashion very often.

Some people think it was his pet message.

It begins with the Beatitudes.

And the Beatitudes are attitudes of the blessed people.

And so chapter 5 of Matthew verse 3, this is how that sermon begins.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, or those who mourn over their spiritual condition, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And so what's going to happen to the Jews in that day is their hearts are finally going to be in a spot where they're broken for their spiritual condition, and then they're able to see their Messiah, and then a fountain of blessing is going to wash over their lives and they'll be cleansed.

And the same is true for you and I. Those who mourn over their sin experience the Messiah.

And when we experience the Messiah and he comes into our life, then there is a fountain of cleansing.

I have there for you in the image Psalm 36 9, which reads like this, For with you, that is the Lord, is the fountain of life.

In your light we see light.

When I think about this fountain that cleanses, I think about the old hymn my grandmother used to sing by William Cowper from the 1770s.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilt and stains.

And so that's the idea here.

The guilty stains washed away.

and cleansing happening now it happens to such a degree that god's going to remove their idolatry which they always struggled with and their false prophets and they were chiefly deceived by idolatry and false prophets so how idolatry works is idolatry usually begins where someone's trying to connect with god so they use an image in place of god to connect with him

In those days, it was actually a little figurine.

In our days, it could be as simple as even wearing a cross around the neck or having a picture.

We want to connect with God, so we need something to help us relate.

So in the beginning, idolatry is worshiping the true God in a false way because we don't need anything to connect us with God because we have the God-man, Jesus Christ, who is expressed image of God.

But if you worship the true God in a false way long enough, that will eventually lead to worship of a false God in a false way.

So they were drawn away and deceived by idols.

And often that's because of the false prophets who were wolves in sheep's clothing.

And God says in that day, when Jesus is seen, when he comes back, those will be cut off.

Now, it's quite shocking that in that day, the false prophets will not be tolerated even by their own family.

And when I think about the different eras of human history or stewardships over faith, or maybe you'd even say dispensations, that's a big word for stewardship, how God interacts with mankind in certain eras, then I am certainly thankful when I read a scripture like this for the New Testament era of grace that we live in.

Because here people are so overcome with the Lord's holiness that they won't even let a false prophet to live within their family.

And I'll tell you, that has to be a supernatural work of the Spirit because have you noticed it's very hard to do right in your family?

It is hard to not engage with your family emotionally.

You get set outside the walls of your house and you can handle situations oftentimes much better than

death within the walls of your family home.

Emotions involved.

I remember that years ago I learned this lesson somewhat the hard way because we had a couple coming to Parkland Chapel and they were in their 60s, wonderful couple.

They came for a couple years, godly, had a huge struggle in their life in that their 36-year-old son had been an alcoholic since he was a teenager.

And when they arrived at Parklet Chapel, it was about to all unravel.

His wife had about had enough.

And eventually while they were attending, she left and took his seven-year-old daughter and he was just distraught.

So he lost the home, didn't have a home, was in the process of losing his job.

And they didn't want to take him in because every time they had tried to take him in, when his wife had kicked him out in the past, he would drink at the house, and then it was uncomfortable, and they didn't want that, and it was also not safe.

But they took him in anyway, and they set the parameters for him.

You can't drink here or you'll have to be gone.

And they were telling me all about this over the weeks that led up to him coming back to the house.

But it wasn't very long until they called me one night, maybe at 11 o'clock or midnight,

and they were frantic and they said, Pastor Mike, our son, he's been drinking.

We didn't know he was drinking and he got the hard liquor and he's went crazy and he's been running around the house with a butcher knife, swinging it at us.

And so we locked ourselves in the bedroom and then it's been a while and we didn't hear any noise.

So we came out and his bedroom door is locked and we don't know if he's in there dead or alive.

What should we do?

Well, this is above my pay grade, by the way.

So I said, well, I would call the police and have them come over and send EMS and do a wellness check on your son.

And so eventually that's what happened.

And when they got the door open, they found him in the closet covered in blood because he had cut himself with this butcher knife and he passed out there.

So the ambulance took him to the hospital.

At that time it was mental area hospital.

And eventually at that time, people would be put in psych holds over at the mental hospital.

And so he was there for, I don't remember if it was 72 or 96 hours.

And then he eventually checked in to Aquinas and I went and visited him with his dad.

But as often the case, he was over at Aquinas on like a 30-day recommended hold, and it's not really a hold.

They can leave if they'd like.

And so like as often the case, about five days in, as he got sober, he's ready to go.

And he doesn't have anywhere to go, and so he wants to come back home.

And his mom and dad had said, look, you're not coming back home, not after this incident.

So they called me again.

And they said, Pastor Mike, can we arrange to meet with you?

And they came in, they were in tears.

Like, we don't know what to do.

Our son's got no place to go, but we're scared.

You know, again, what would you do?

Like, well, I don't want to really tell you what to do, but if it was me and I looked at the husband, I'm like, I would not let your son back in the house.

You got to protect your wife, right?

If this happens when you're not there, or even if you are there, like this is life and death.

And

Besides that, you don't want him dying in your house if he ends up actually hurting himself.

And I said, I wouldn't let him back in the house, and I know that seems hard.

Okay, we prayed.

That was on, say, a Thursday.

He gets out that day from Aquinas and goes directly back to their house.

And so it's Sunday, and the sanctuary, we're over there where the youth meet.

Half of that youth room was our sanctuary.

There's like 20 or 30 of us in the sanctuary of which these two people are part of the congregation.

And about halfway through me teaching, I still remember where I was at.

I was in Ephesians teaching on elders and deacons.

This woman gets up, the wife, shakes her keys real loud and slams the door on her way out.

And it couldn't be missed.

I couldn't figure out what was going on.

I was like, well, I didn't think I was that offensive with Ephesians, you know.

Yeah.

And so the next day, the husband shows up to my little study, which was right over here in the corner where there's now a closet.

And he said, hey, I need to talk to you.

Yeah, he goes, we're leaving the church.

And I said, well, what's going on?

He said, well, my wife just can't look at you anymore.

She can't stand you.

You don't understand.

You only have a two-year-old son.

You wouldn't understand what it's like to deal with what we've had to deal with.

And then you're so callous just to tell us to not let our son back in the house.

And they left.

And what I realized right then was that not that I was the word of God, not that what I said was the end all be all, had nothing to do with that.

It just accentuated to me that when it comes to family, it's hard to put God in front of family and it's hard to look at truth objectively.

So the fact that in this era, people are running their children through for false prophecy is a work of God that I cannot even fathom, but I'm glad I don't live in this era.

That's what I'm telling you.

Sometimes when it's tough, we need to be thankful for the era of grace that we live in.

And so here, they won't tolerate false prophets, and that has an effect on false prophets.

Look at verse 4.

It shall be in the day that every prophet, in that day, the last day, in that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies.

And they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive, but he will say, I'm no prophet.

I'm a farmer for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

And he will say to him, what are these wounds between your arms?

And he will answer, those are the ones, these wounds that I have between my arms, those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

And so the cleansing fountain impacts the false prophets as well as the people.

The false prophets will be ashamed of their prophesying.

The false prophets are always brash.

Think TV evangelist.

You've never seen so many pompous jackasses as these TV evangelists.

I mean, can you believe it?

I mean, no humility whatsoever.

And that's the prophets swaggering around, prophesying, thus sayeth the Lord.

Well, that's what's happening here.

But now they're going to be meek.

If they prophesy at all, it's going to be with meekness.

It's going to be with fear and trembling.

It's going to be with power under control.

They're not going to any longer wear the robe of coarse hair, which is like Elijah and John the Baptist wore.

They wore it to deceive.

It connected them directly with true prophets.

They knew what would get the people's attention.

And the prophet will claim when people say, man, do you prophesy?

He'll be like, no, no.

Instead, I'm a farmer, not a prophet.

He won't boast about his occupation or his calling.

That reminds me of Amos.

He was a humble guy.

They said, where do you come off thinking you're a prophet?

He said, I'm no prophet.

I'm a fig tender and a sheep keeper from the valley of Tekoa.

I'm just doing what God told me to do.

He wasn't pompous.

And they'll even try to cover up the source of their wounds.

They'll say, where'd you get those wounds?

And in all likelihood, they got those wounds because as false prophets, they were connected to paganism and they cut themselves to invoke their God's attention.

And so they'll cover it up and say, well, we got those in the house of our friends.

And yet then that leads to one of the coolest undercover prophecies in this whole book, because I truly believe that verse six, while it does flow out of verse five, it flows into verse seven.

and it speaks of the Messiah, when he is acknowledged as the one whom they pierced, one will say to him, what are these wounds between your arms or literally in your hands?

And Jesus will say, I received these wounds in the house of my friends.

He came to his own and his own received him not.

I think that because look at verse seven, awake, O sword against my shepherd.

against the man who is my companion.

Now stop there just for a second.

Zechariah presents Jesus as a shepherd.

Have you noticed as we've studied Zechariah, Zechariah loves horses and he loves shepherds.

Did you hear about the movie that's being made of the shepherd that retired in the Pacific Northwest?

It's called Sheepless in Seattle.

You know, I think you guys are sheepish with your reaction to that joke is what I think.

Anyway, the shepherd is capitalized in my Bible.

It's the Messiah.

It's Jesus.

So the sword is going to awake against my shepherd, against the man that's capitalized in my Bible.

In fact, Jesus is the man.

I had one person tell me one time,

Don't you ever let any man keep you from the man.

And so the man who is my companion.

My is capitalized and companion is capitalized.

Companion can be translated fellow or actually equal.

And Jesus is God in the flesh.

And he came to give his life for the sins of the world.

God's companion.

And so he is stricken, notice.

They will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

And then I will turn my hand against the little ones.

And this verse right here, strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, was quoted by Jesus of himself in Matthew 26, verse 31, as he is instituting the Lord's Supper on the night of the Passover.

He said to all of them,

you will be made to stumble because of me, every one of you this night, for it is written, and he quotes from Zechariah, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

And indeed in chapter 26, the same chapter in verse 56, it says that night, just hours after that prophecy, all of the disciples forsook him and fled at his arrest.

And in fact, in Mark, Mark describes a young man who many people believe it was him, since he doesn't name him, who at the arrest of Jesus was grabbed by the

Roman soldiers, and he struggled so hard, he struggled out of his robe and ran naked away from that arrest.

Every person fled.

Every person ran away.

Why?

Because...

Jesus was not what they had hoped he would be, so they were offended by what he was.

And so because they had ignored his prediction about his death and resurrection, when it finally arrived, they weren't prepared.

Their failure cascade caused them to stumble and flee.

And ignoring Jesus' prediction, they had a complete system collapse of their faith until he rounds them back up at the resurrection.

And so the stricken shepherd.

It shall come to pass, verse 8 says, in all the land, when he turns his hand against the little ones, says the Lord, that two-thirds in the land shall be cut off, but one-third shall be left in it,

and I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and I'll test them as gold is tested, and they will call on my name, and I will answer them, and I will say, this is my people, and each one will say, the Lord is my God.

In the tribulation period, the Bible predicts here that only one-third of Israel will survive the refining fires, is the imagery here,

of the Great Tribulation.

While the tribulation, the way I understand it, is global, it focuses primarily on the Jewish people, the church age being ended, and Jeremiah chapter 30 verse 7 calls it the time of Jacob's trouble.

Now there's always tribulation in the world, but this won't be normal tribulation.

In

Matthew 24, verses 21 and 22, Jesus said, for then there shall be great tribulation.

That's why it gets the name.

Such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be.

And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.

But for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened.

Now, before I go on, there are people who do believe the

elect are going to go through the tribulation and they will, but it will not be the church because there are actually three different types of elect in the Bible.

There's the old Testament elect saints who are mostly Jews and

There are New Testament or elect saints who are mostly Gentile, but the church is made up of Gentiles and Jews.

And then there are specifically the tribulation saints, which are made up of Jews and Gentiles, but primarily Jewish as God is focusing again on that nation.

So what we're talking about here is if God didn't shorten this time, the most horrific time in human history, no flesh would survive and there wouldn't be any elect to make it through.

Now, as I say that, I have for you at the bottom of the screen a chart of Christians who do believe in the rapture of the church, which is not all Christians, or the rapture being Christ returning for the church.

There are three main schools of thought, and I have them here for you.

The first one is a pre-tribulation rapture, or the rapture of the church happening before the tribulation.

There are some who believe that Jesus comes back for the church in the middle of the tribulation at the three and a half year mark because they see the first three and a half years as not horrific.

I would disagree, but they say that the Lord will come back and take the church out before the Antichrist really goes on a rampage.

And then there are those that believe in a post-tribulation rapture, which is amazing.

After the tribulation is over, the Lord will come back to rapture the church and institute his kingdom all at one time.

Jesus' second coming happens all at one specific event.

Now, just to digress for a minute, I teach and I believe the Bible teaches a pre-tribulation rapture first and foremost because 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 9 says that we as saints are not appointed to wrath.

And what people don't understand about the seven-year period of the tribulation is this isn't normal tribulation or normal judgment.

This is wrath.

This is the wrath of God being poured out on the earth, just read Revelation, until the cup is full.

And so the great tribulation is wrath, and the church is not appointed to wrath.

Now, the great tribulation, I should say this, there's a rising number of people who believe in the tribulation that

are growing towards post-tribulation beliefs, and they almost always believe that they can prep or prepare to survive it.

Please, I'll tell you this, like trying to tell somebody what they should do with their drunken son who's 36 and swinging a machete around or a butcher knife, I guess.

Some of this is above my pay grade.

I can't make you believe anything, but I can ask you as a Bible teacher,

to read the book of Revelation and realize you can't prepare or survive the tribulation on your own, no matter where you come to it at.

Like if your idea is I can get ready for it, please just read it with objective truth.

And so it can't be prepared for, it can't be outlasted, unless I would say you are a certain amount of Jews who God prepares a place for the wilderness to survive it.

We'll talk about all that next week.

But anyway, man, God's church, as it were, isn't appointed in this case to wrath.

That's the first reason I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture.

And the second reason is 2 Thessalonians seems to indicate that the church is actually the restraining influence that when it's removed at the rapture allows the tribulation to happen.

We completely underestimate our effectiveness as a church.

No matter how weak we are and diluted, we are the salt and the light that preserves this world.

2 Thessalonians 2, verses 7 and 8 says of this time, for the mystery of lawlessness, it's already at work.

We don't have a clue how bad lawlessness could be without the church around us.

embodied Holy Spirit, you might say, for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.

There's already lawlessness at work and it's getting worse.

Only he who now restrains will do so only until he was taken out of the way.

And I really, like many, believe that that is the church empowered by the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit embodied by the church taken out of the way.

And then, verse 8, the lawless one or the Antichrist will be revealed and

whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

Now, having said all that, then just let me say this, that while the Great Tribulation is global, again, it deals with Israel itself,

And there will be a Holocaust during the Great Tribulation that will be unlike anyone's ever seen for a while.

Let's say it says here only one third will survive.

That would mean if there's seven million Jews in Israel right now, five million would be killed.

Genocide.

It won't be behind closed doors or in death camps that the world doesn't know of.

It appears it's going to be all openly celebrated and the world is going to be OK with it.

And so the church is not mentioned past Revelation 3, and Israel is primarily the elect that will come through the tribulation, and yet only one-third will make it.

Two-thirds will die, and one-third of Israel will be saved, and yet that salvation will be total.

Romans 11, verse 25, Paul said, "...I don't desire, brethren, that you would be ignorant of the mystery."

lest you should be wise in your own opinion.

That blindness in part has happened to Israel until, here it is, the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

I believe that's correlating with the rapture of the church.

And so all Israel will be saved.

As it is written, the deliverer will come out of Zion.

He will turn away the ungodliness from Jacob.

And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

It's everything we're reading about in Zechariah, that they'll be saved spiritually and physically.

Well, I'm almost out of time, so I want to just make one more point of application when I think about this horrific testing.

Israel is tested in proportion to their blindness to the rejection of Christ.

And again, they lived in a different era, and God will deal with them primarily in a different era.

Because of their blindness, Romans says the church age actually happened.

Somehow God worked their blindness out to me as a Gentile, and you as a Gentile are good.

But God tests Israel, as it says here in verse 9, gold is tested.

Only one-third comes through the fire, refined, but it's pure.

And gold is tested by the refining process.

I mentioned the first service.

That picture over here is a picture of Pace Aluminum Factory in Harrison, Arkansas.

And in 1992, when I...

So proficiently flunked out of college, which is not hard to do if you major in Budweiser and don't go to class.

I was actually in Branson at School of the Ozarks, and Branson was riding high at that time.

In fact, people were wearing T-shirts that said, the last person in Nashville, turn out the lights.

They thought Branson was the next Nashville.

Didn't quite make it, still love Branson.

Okay, don't send me hate mail.

I love Branson.

Go to Hillbilly Heaven all the time.

But it's not quite Nashville.

Wasn't really ever meant to be.

At the time, there were so many people building Branson, you couldn't get an apartment.

So when I promptly flunked out of college, I couldn't find an apartment.

So I moved to Harrison, Arkansas, because I was working at Big Cedar Lodge, and it was about halfway between Branson and Harrison.

I moved down there and eventually stayed and got a job at Pace Aluminum Factory.

Little did I know how much that job would help me understand all the imagery in the Bible about the refining process, because what happened at that job was they had these big furnaces were like the third the size of this building.

And they would fill them full of these big sows or 2000 pound blocks of aluminum or ingots, smaller ones that you could put in a little at a time.

And then they would heat them up to 1,200 degrees, and that's where that die-cast aluminum would liquefy.

And then when that would liquefy after a little bit, all the impurities would float to the top, the dross and the flux.

So imagine, you know, it's August in Harrison, Arkansas, all the humidity and the heat.

And then on top of it, you've got these furnaces at 1200 degrees and your job is to rake.

That's what that guy's doing with a long rake that you can only use so long because you'd pull it in there and then you'd manually pull the dross and the flux off where he's got a really fancy OSHA approved suit.

Ours weren't that nice back in 1992.

And through the heat, you'd pull that off

eventually it would melt those rakes just like this you'd have to get a new rake and so you'd pull the the dross and the flux off and you'd pile it all the slag up on the floor and then you'd shovel it into a container that would be picked up by a fork truck for the first time in my life i drove drove a fork truck for eight hours or so and at that time the uh

forward and reverse were over here on the left.

And so, you know, in a hurry, it only had forward and reverse.

You'd slam it in the first.

And then I realized I learned this the hard way.

It's not uncommon for people who drive fork trucks to get into their vehicle after work and just rip the blinker straight off the thing.

You know, you don't even think about it.

You just get in.

Now I got my hand out the window, you know.

Anyway, I digress.

I'm almost out of time anyway.

I got to stop telling stories.

But there, you would deliver in big ladles on fork trucks to the die-cast machines, purified aluminum.

I eventually got a job as a central milk clerk where I would take samples, run it through a spectrometer, and decide by the computer's encouragement whether this metal was good enough to make, at that time mostly, sunbeam barbecue grills that were sold at Walmart.

So if you ever had one,

And you enjoyed a bratwurst on that deal?

That was me, at least in part.

But the process was something.

Man, the heat was brutal.

The slag was nasty.

And we wore on our bodies coverings.

If you had a piece of that liquid aluminum drop on your shoe without the leather coverings, it would burn straight through your foot to the ground.

And yet, at the end of that thing...

We produce something that was worthy of impacting other people's lives.

It was worthy of being sold.

It was worthy as a product.

It's tested and approved.

And our faith is tested in the same manner.

In fact, 1 Peter 1, verse 6 says, "...in this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while..."

So we don't rejoice for all things, but we can rejoice in all things because why would we rejoice if need be?

Sometimes trials and tribulation are need be.

Why?

Well, you've been grieved by these various trials and tribulations that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Talked about this for just a little bit Wednesday.

And that's testing.

The key note verse for testing in the Bible is in Romans 5, verse 1.

So it says that tribulation or trials, they produce patience or perseverance.

By the way, if your grandma ever said, don't pray for patience, God might just give it to you.

That is some horrible theology.

I mean, your grandma was way off

And the reason is that in the New Testament, as we mentioned, patience is the thing that matters as much as anything practically.

How do we get to the finish line?

Patience.

The one thing required of us is endurance or patience.

So tribulation produces patience and patience produces character, Romans 5 says.

And character is important because that's what God's shaping me to be is a character fit for heaven and

And the unfortunate part is I care about my character way less than God cares about my character.

I'm pretty good with who I am right now, and God knows I'm a turd.

Okay?

So he wants to clean up my character.

He does.

And so what he does is he allows refining fires.

Tribulation produces perseverance.

Perseverance produces character.

And character, then, Romans says, produces hope.

And hope doesn't disappoint because it's been given to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that's shed abroad across our lives.

And that God's doing something that's worthy through tribulation and testing.

He's producing a character that can experience heaven.

And speaking of that, I'm out of time.

But let me make mention that 1 Corinthians 3:9-15 says that the only thing that's going to stand in eternity is that which has been tested by fire.

All the wood, the hay, the stubble in my life is going to burn up and the only thing that's going to be left is that pure gold and silver, the imagery that has been refined through the testing fires of the Lord.

And what is produced in that testing is fire.

restored relationship.

And here's the thing about restored relationship.

Sometimes I don't even know that I need restored relationship.

I think I'm doing good.

I read my Bible today, Lord.

I prayed a little bit, wrote in my journal.

Dog tripped me, didn't kick it.

Man, I'm crushing it.

Didn't cuss the guy who cut me off.

Crushing it.

God says, no, not really.

You know, that's not the standard.

That's the wrong measuring stick.

So he allows some tribulation in there because there's nothing like disaster to get my attention and turn it towards the divine.

And so what he does in that is he restores relationship that I may have not even known needed restored.

And look at this.

I'll test them as gold is tested.

They will call on my name.

And what will happen?

Anytime we call on the name of the Lord, I will answer them.

And I will say, this is my people, and they will say, the Lord is my God.

Gives me chills.

Well, in conclusion, just a couple things to take away maybe.

I ask myself this, so I'll ask you this.

Have I been offended or stumbled because of something Jesus either has or has not done in my life?

Have I been offended and stumbled and maybe even scattered?

I'd say, Lord, help me to agree with you about who you are and what you're doing.

Secondly, if I am in the fires of testing, it's so I can be refined or purified.

May the Lord grant me the strength to let him finish the process.

I was praying over this in my study this morning and then in came Mindy Liu.

Her office and mine connect.

She said, hey, I got something to tell you.

You got time?

I'm like, I'm trying to be with Jesus here.

Could you just leave me alone?

I'm like, in the heavenlies.

I didn't say it like that, but that's what I thought.

She said, I got something you got to hear about buffalo.

I'm like, what?

Do you know buffalo, she said, are the only animals that turn and face into a storm?

And the reason they do it is they know that you can't outrun a storm.

If you turn and face into it, that's the quickest way to get through it.

Lord, help us to be buffaloes.

Help us acknowledge your testing and trials are from you and they're to produce something.

Help us not run away from it.

Give us the strength to lean into them, to walk into them and to experience patience,

and character, and hope.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Why don't you guys stand, and we'll do one last song.