

# Faith Under Fire

(Go To Meeting)

Russell Kemp—December 24, 2021

I want everybody to look back just a few months ago when we were at the Feast of Tabernacles, and we certainly look forward to that period of time. We look forward to the time when we understand that Satan will be bound and we will see a different world and people following the Laws of God.

Unfortunately, we are now back in Satan's world! We're going to have deal and contend with the everyday activities of Satan's world until the time for Christ to return.

This is what we're dealing with and we're certainly living in very shaky times, to say the least. We're looking at a period of time where we have:

- open borders in our country
- Russia is massing 100,000 troops on the border of Ukraine

*They're telling us to stay out of their affairs, that it's their business.'*

- China is over there doing the same thing and about ready to takeover Taiwan

*We promised to protect Taiwan, and China is telling us to stay out of their affairs.*

- Hezbollah and Iran again getting ready to attack Israel
- a lawless society in our own country

*It's a pretty difficult and frightening world that we live in!*

**IF** we truly believe in what the Prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, Obadiah—name anyone that you want—all the prophets! **IF** what they predict is coming, **THEN** we could face a very rocky future.

In order to survive, some of these prophecies, it will require **unfailing faith!** How will you faith hold up when tested and refined by fire.

Before we look at faith under fire, we need to understand what faith is. Let's begin by defining faith. We find the definition of faith in Heb. 11, the faith chapter, and I think it's very clear, very explicit!

Hebrews 11:1: "Now, **faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.**" *Faith is the hope that we have for things that we really cannot see!*

Verse 3: "By faith we understand that the worlds were created by *the* Word of God, **so that the things that are seen were made from things**

**that are invisible.**"

We can't see the things. We see: the world, the rivers, stars, planets, all the creation of God. We weren't there to see the creation. We didn't see the things that took place. We can't see God, but we accept that He created all those things that we do see.

- What happens when our faith is under fire?
- What can shake our faith and the hope that we have?

I want to key in on that word *hope*. When we entered into a covenant with God through baptism, we were never guaranteed 'a walk in the park' in this world today. It was not part of the guarantee.

We could go back and look at Jeremiah and God said that He would protect him, but look what Jeremiah had to deal with; look what he had to go through.

The Bible gives us many examples of faith being tested by fire. I want to take a look at some of those, because it's instructional to see they reacted to the situations they were put in.

I want you to understand that ***faith comes first, before all things, because without faith we will not have hope!*** If you want to have hope, you have to have faith in the things you can't see.

What can we learn from those who have had their faith tested by fire?

**Peter:**

We know that Peter suffered because of his faith. Peter tells us that we have to have a ***living hope!***

1-Peter 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again **unto a living hope...**" ***How do we have that living hope?***

**"...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"** (v 3). ***What is that hope?***

Verse 4: "Unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us, who *are* **being safeguarded by the power of God through faith** for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time" (vs 4-5). ***We look to those last days!***

We have a promise of things that we can't see in this life, **but through faith we have hope** that what has been promised actually will happen.

Verse 6: "In this you yourselves greatly rejoice; though for the present... [talking about our physical life right now] ...**if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials.**"

We all face those trials! We live with them! We live in a world where we're going to face those trials. We're warned about facing those trials; Peter wants the reader to be prepared for these trials.

What can we learn from Peter's warning? *That we may face heaviness through the many trials and temptations in this life!* It should be normal for us to **rejoice if we really:**

- know the Truth
- believe in the Truth
- have faith in the Truth

*We should rejoice and we're told to do so!*

However, when we are tested—and Peter says that we will be—we will often face discouragement. I know, I've been there! I've got the T-shirt, I've had those days of discouragement when faced with trials.

Life is not always 'a walk in the park'! What we need to understand is that these times *are temporary!*

- they're only temporary
- all trials are temporary
- physical life itself is temporary

*This physical body that we're in right now, will not last forever!* Some of us who getting older realize that we're closer to that being done.

Some Christians seem to think that once they're baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit, all their problems will be over, the trials will be done. I even, in some ways, fell into that category multiple years ago, where I thought: *now that I'm baptized a lot of these problems are going to go away!* **Well, they're not!**

I guess that we think that through faith in Jesus Christ we should be through with trials and now we will just live on the 'grave train.' Sounds good! But that's not what we're taught it's far from the truth of reality. *In this world, we are to have trouble!*

John says explicitly that in the world you will have tribulation (John 16:33). Stop and think about these things. Christians are not immune from sickness. I know that, because right after the Feast my wife and I went through about a month of Covid.

It wasn't a pleasant thing to deal with, and I'm sure many, many of you have dealt with that and worse.

We're not immune from disease, and we're not immune from death. These things are all real. Just take a look at the prayer requests that we get on a daily basis. Multiply that by all the Churches of God and you can get a pretty good picture and idea of the many trials that we face.

Christians are subject to financial problems, and I doubt seriously that any of us can go through life without running into a financial problem or two at some time, at one time or another. I know that I can look back in my early years—with a wife and five kids and her not being able to work—I worked two jobs sometimes, two full-time jobs to be able to provide the income. Not a pleasant thing to do, but something that we do. I've been there and know some of that!

We also, as parents, have problems with our children sometimes. I remember a deacon many, many years ago—probably in the early to mid 1980s—told my wife Laura and I that if you raise your children as God intended, that you would not have any problems with them.

Well, we lived close to his own daughter whom we knew fairly well, and his own daughter had tremendous, terrible problems. Laura and I have had nine children that we've raised. We love every one of them, like I'm sure you love all your children, but we've had our share of problems with them over time.

They're not perfect, and we can just look at the Biblical examples of the children of some of the prophets. So many of them! And the kings; look at the children of King David. Look at Absalom and what David had to deal with. So, we do run into problems sometimes with our own family, our own children.

How about at work. I'm fortunate, I'm retired and don't have to deal with those problems anymore, but I did. Have you ever had problems with your boss or co-workers? Ever? If you can go through life without any work-related problems, I would like to know your secret for that.

However, all these trials do not take God by surprise! He remains the same in all situations. He doesn't change!

Hebrews 13:8<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>: "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.**"

These trials have a purpose! Even our faith is being tested by fire! That's part of the purpose of these trials.

1-Peter 1:7: “In order that the proving of your faith, which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is being tested by fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

What a wonderful statement! We’re being tested! How well Peter knew this! Jesus had revealed to Peter His coming death on the cross. Jesus had warned Peter to expect rejection by the world, and he was! Peter had experienced persecution for his faith, and he was eventually martyred!

**Paul** knew about trials. We can read through all of Paul’s writings. He was imprisoned, stoned, eventually martyred.

**Stephen** knew about these problems and died as a martyr.

**James** knew about these trials, and he finally died for his faith.

Throughout history, Christians have faced these trials, and many in the world today are losing their lives for their faith. It is happening today in the world for those who still follow and believe in Jesus Christ. ***Trials definitely test our faith!***

I’m ‘preaching to the choir’ here in many respects, I know that! However, we can be triumphant through Jesus Christ in these trials. Our faith is being perfected. Tough as they are sometimes, our trials are helping us to be perfected. *It’s like gold being purified by fire!*

When Christ returns it will reveal that our faith is real! These trials are temporary and they won’t last forever. ***But the rewards that we are promised—and they are eternal—will last forever!***

Verse 8: “Whom, not having seen, you love; in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him... [we don’t see Christ] ...you believe, *and* rejoice with unspeakable joy, and filled with glory.” ***Perfect example of faith!***

Even though we don’t see Christ, He is with us during these trials that we face.

Hebrews 13:5—*Christ tells us*: “...‘**In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.**’”

We don’t have to face these trials alone! They’re not pleasant and are difficult, but we don’t face them alone.

We know that Paul had some sort of physical weakness that he asked Christ to heal. For whatever reason we don’t know, Christ chose not to heal him of this problem.

2-Corinthians 12:9: “But He [Christ] said to

me [Paul], ‘My **grace** is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness.’....”

Sometimes we need to just endure the cross. We must endure to the end! Let’s look at a mother’s example in Matt. 15, and the lessons for us.

### **Gentile Woman:**

Matthew 15:21: “Then Jesus left there and withdrew into the area of Tyre and Sidon; and, behold, a Canaanite woman who came from those borders cried to Him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously possessed by a demon’” (vs 21-22).

I’ve accused my kids of being ‘demons’ but, all joking aside, this is a pretty serious thing. She’s calling Christ and asking for help. Mark says that this daughter was ‘possessed with an unclean spirit.’ The daughter was apparently controlled by unclean thoughts and probably suffered at times with profane rage. Think about that as a parent.

However, notice the Gentile woman’s prayer; talk about faith. “...‘**Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David...**’” *She knew Who He was!* This woman believed in Christ and that He had the power to heal her daughter.

Verse 23: “But He [Christ] did not answer her a word. And His disciples came *and* requested of Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she is crying out behind us.’”

Now, here’s a perfect example to me of faith under fire. She had the faith that Christ could heal her daughter. She was crying out for help, and Christ did not respond. Christ says that in order to have hope you must have faith, *and He wasn’t answering!*

How many times have we prayed and don’t seem to get an answer? But notice that this woman was not going to give up, and she continued to cry for help. Also notice the ‘love and compassion’ of the disciples. They said to *send her away she’s bothering us!*

I would hope that we’re not bothered by those that seems to have more faith than we do. Do we get annoyed because we get too many prayer requests? Why did the disciples want to send her away and not get involved? *I don’t know!* We could take a rough guess, and maybe they were just happy that they were disciples of Christ and enjoyed talking to Him, teaching them, and she was a bother. *I don’t know the answer!*

Think of the dimensions of this woman’s faith: she was a Gentile, a woman of Canaan. She recognized Jesus as the Messiah and she called Him *Lord!* She apparently believed that Jesus was more

powerful than Satan. She had a daughter who was possessed, and she was able to see beyond what appeared to be rejection.

*Christ told her*, v 24: “But He answered *and* said, ‘I have not been sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”

This woman had faith and persistence! Notice her response:

Verse 25: “Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’”

Have you’ve ever been on your knees asking God for help?

Verse 26: “But He answered *and* said, ‘It is not proper to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the dogs.’”

*Talk about a discouragement!* But notice the woman’s humble response to Jesus:

Verse 27: “And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’”

Her faith in Christ was persistent and unyielding. As a result:

Verse 28: “Then Jesus answered *and* said to her, ‘**O woman, great is your faith! As you have desired, so be it to you.**’ And her daughter was healed from that hour.”

Do we give up on our prayers? When our faith is being tested by fire, we need to be fervent and persistent in our prayers.

### **Jonah:**

Our next example is one of just being thankful; helps us get the right response. Not too long ago we celebrated Thanksgiving Day. We know that Jonah had ‘a whale’ of a thanksgiving.

I’m going to go into all the details, but we know that Jonah refused to do the will of God to go to Nineveh. He hated Nineveh and the people; they were enemies of Israel. So, he didn’t go as instructed and fled to Tarshish, which ultimately resulted in him being tossed into the sea, swallowed by the ‘great fish’ and at this point Jonah knew that he was in deep trouble. Like some of us, we sin; we do things wrong, and sometimes we know that we’re in deep trouble. Jonah probably thought that his life was over.

When we think of Thanksgiving, it usually follows a deliverance from some kind of dangerous. That was true of the very first Americans when we read the story. The cold winter and the sickness had claimed many of their lives. However, they were

encouraged when they reaped the good harvest and it was time to give things. That’s what really created our first Thanksgiving!

Stop and think about the dangerous lives that we live today. Like it or not, we are only one heartbeat away from death. I’m not trying to be negative on this; I’m trying to be real. I told you, life is temporary, one heartbeat away from death. We are alive only by the good grace of God.

I don’t know how many of you remember Dave Ramsey, a financial guru that’s always on the radio. He used to say that he was better off than he deserved. Well, we can be thankful to God for what we have. I probably don’t deserve the goodness that God’s given me in my life, but I’m grateful and thankful for it.

Notice Jonah’s prayer out the belly of the big fish:

Jonah 2:2: “And he said, ‘I cried to the LORD by reason of mine affliction. And He answered me. Out of the belly of the unseen I cried for help, *and **You heard my voice***’—*faith!*”

Jonah cried out to God for help because he obviously knew that he was in deep trouble. Like Jonah, we have all faced trouble, and will probably face more as time goes on.

I would hope not as dire as Jonah’s situation. But trouble nevertheless. At one time, every one of us was lost in sin:

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” *And we all deserve the death penalty!*

Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death...”

We all deserve to die; but Christ died and paid the penalty for our death:

Romans 5:8 “But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

But like Jonah, we have been rescued by Christ from death. Without Him, we all suffer the penalty of death.

When we’re in trouble and our faith is being tested by fire, and God delivers us, we need to be thankful for that deliverance. God has been good to us, and we need to be thankful. We have truly been blessed in this nation. I’m a little worried by what I’m seeing take place now, but we have truly been blessed.

I don’t think any human being on earth has ever lived as good as we have—my generation—in

the history of the world.

Jonah's deliverance came as a result of him telling God that he was thankful, grateful!

Jonah 2:9: "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will fulfill that which I have vowed. Salvation *belongs* to the LORD!" *What was the result of that thankful prayer?*

Verse 10: "And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out on the dry land."

I'll bet he was pretty stinky at that point, but he was probably very grateful. When our faith is under fire, we need to be faithful in thanking God that He has brought us safety and brought us through these trials that we deal with.

### **Job:**

I think that probably the greatest test of faith by fire was the story of Job. Let me just read a little bit of Job 1 to get a feel for just who Job was.

Job 1:1: There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job. And **that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and turned aside from evil.** *A good, Godly man!*

Verse 2: "And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters.... [lucky man, 10 children] ...And his possessions also were seven thousand sheep..." (vs 2-3).

That's a lot. I've actually raised sheep, but with us it was usually six or seven at a time.

"...and three thousand camels... [never had a camel but we had 3 llamas] ...and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and a very great household... [they lived in a lot of splendor] ...so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east" (vs 2-3)—*talk about blessings! Job was truly blessed!* And he was truly faithful, according to what we read.

So, we get a pretty good picture here that Job had a happy family. He was good, Godly and prosperous man. Obviously, Job was doing very well in life, and he had a great family.

From what we just read he was healthy, wealthy and doing well. Then came the day that Job's castles began to tumble!

Satan went to God and said that he wanted to test Job, this faithful man. 'I want to test him!' The result begins in v 13. I'm telling you, if we think we have problems:

Verse 13: "Now, there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And there came

a messenger to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing, and the donkeys feeding beside them. And the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away. Yea, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And **I only have escaped alone to tell you**' (vs 13-15). *Bad news! Pretty devastating!*

Verse 16: "While he *was* still speaking, there also came *another* and said, 'The fire of God has fallen from the heavens and has burned up the sheep and the servants, and destroyed them. **And I only have escaped alone to tell you**'" *More devastating news!*

Verse 17: While he *was* still speaking, there also came *another* and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three bands and swooped down upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and have killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And **I only have escaped alone to tell you.**'" *I've faced some trials, but nothing this bad!*

Verse 18: While he *was* still speaking, there also came another and said, 'Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And, behold, a great wind came from the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead. And **I only have escaped alone to tell you.**'" (vs 18-19).

I've raised a lot of children and have been very fortunate with their health. If you think you've got problems, Job's enemies stole his oxen, killed those caring for them; his shepherds were killed by lightning. The Chaldeans stole his camels and killed their keepers, and finally his own sons and daughters were all killed in a storm.

Do you think that's enough to shake your faith? We could continue reading through the book of Job and know that things only got worse. We know he had the boils and lived in terrible pain. However, for the purpose of *faith*, let's see what Job's attitude was.

Verse 20: "And Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshiped."

***He put his trust in God! Even after that devastation! His faith was still unshaken!***

Verse 21: "And he said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed *be* the name of the LORD.'" *How could Job still maintain his faith?*

I know that my brother and father both lost a lot of faith during the loss of a child—my brother's son—to leukemia. It was a horrible thing to go

through. He was about six or seven. My brother wasn't in any of the particular Churches of God, but I remember him telling me the story the night that his son was dying, that he told his son, 'He was going to be with the angels his son looked at him and said he didn't want be with angels, 'I want to be with you.' Hard to lose a child or any family member.

Job saw the Lord as the source of life, when he said, "...the LORD gave..." Parents are just partners with God in giving life. All life come from the Lord, *all life!* I, like many of you, have witnessed the miracle of birth; what a blessing! What a tremendous blessing from God!

Job knew that his time that he had with his children was by grace. I'm sure that he remembered all the good times, all the fun times and all the times the family spent together. Job knew as James says:

James 1:17: "**Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above...**"

God is the great Giver, and the greatest gift of all was His own Son.

Job saw the Lord as Sovereign over the length of life, when he said that "...the LORD has taken away...."

There are two very surprising things about life:

- length when death seems near
- brevity when the future seems short

*Our breath is literally in God's hands!*

Daniel 5:23: "...in Whose hand *is* your breath and all your ways."

Job understood that life is short at the longest. Childhood seems like yesterday to all of us. You can obviously see that I'm not a young man, but sometimes I look back and wonder what happened to all of those years that I was a child, a teenager in the 1950s, what a wonderful life! Like many of you, I can't believe how fast time has passed since I was a child. *Life is fleeting!*

I also look at my children, and I remember holding them when they weren't much bigger than my hand. Now they range from the their 40s to their 60s. Where did time go? We need to stay faithful with God from day one until our very last breath!

Job stayed faithful! He eventually did question God. God did eventually challenge God and he learned a lot of lessons from that.

### **Poor Widow:**

Let's look at another example of faith. In Luke 21 we're introduced to a poor widow from Jerusalem. There are many things we don't know about this woman; very little. We're not given her age, her name, and don't know what she looks like. We don't know how many children she has, or the reason for her husbands death. We were just not given those details.

However, we do know that she was a woman of faith, and she was very poor. What she did, what she actually has accomplished has caused us to remember her to this very day, and it's written in the Scriptures.

For whatever reason—we're not told—her faith took her to the place of worship. We're only given a few verses about this situation; let's set the stage for this event. Christ is speak and talking to the apostles:

Luke 20:46: "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk in robes, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and *the* chief seats in the synagogues, and *the* chief places at the suppers; who devour the houses of widows, and as a pretext pray at great length. These shall receive the greater judgment" (vs 46-47).

Luke 21:1: "When He looked up, He saw the rich men casting their offerings into the treasury. Then He also saw a certain poor widow drop in two small coins. And He said, 'Of a truth, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all *of them*; for all these have from their abundance cast into the offerings to God; but she, out of her poverty, did put *in* all the livelihood that she had'" (vs 1-4).

The treasury was at the temple in Jerusalem, and apparently many had come to give offerings and to worship. Perhaps some of the people chose to stay away for various reasons. Even today, some may not come to services because they don't feel their clothes are good enough.

Actually, that brings back a reminder/memory to me of a man in the Worldwide Church of God. He was forced to leave the Philippines when Marcos was overthrown, because he was affiliated with Marcos. He came to Jacksonville, Florida, where I lived at the time. I was asked to help him get settled. Part of the reason was that I had spent a lot of time in the Philippines, especially during the Vietnam War.

At this time, this man and his wife had very little, because they had to flee rapidly. He wore what he had, and it was standard dress in the Philippines to Sabbath services.

I remember back then several people going to the minister and complaining about the way he

was dressed for Sabbath services. *What a shame!* Some may not have attended that temple with this widow because they thought too many of the wealthy were there and thought they didn't belong, and were not part of it.

Maybe they were just ashamed to go because they were not able to give a large gift. We don't know, we're not given details.

Still, others may have chosen to stay away because they worked hard all week and maybe they were just too tired to attend. But this poor widow, this woman was rich in faith and her shortage of funds did not keep her from the temple. Apparently, this woman's faith moved her to give; a reason to give.

Many would have thought they couldn't afford to give, and every penny was needed for a living. Other's may have thought, 'let the wealthy give.'

But here's we're looking at this poor widow who considered giving as an act of worship. She couldn't give much, but she couldn't keep from giving. She gave two mites, or small copper coins, and I'm sure many considered her gift insignificant.

But this gift was important to the widow, and she wanted to do something for the Lord. This widow's faith caused her to give all that she had, **and Jesus saw that this was the largest gift of the day! He said that she gave more than all the rest!**

God measures our gifts by our ability to give. The rest only gave part of their wealth, but this widow held nothing back. Imagine the inward struggle about this gift. She would have nothing left! Her faith told her to give it all and put her trust in God. Her faith was tested by fire, and she gave all that she had! She held nothing back! **Do we have that kind of faith?**

### **Daniel:**

What do we know about Daniel? *We know that he and his friends were taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar!* Probably around 530<sub>B.C.</sub>, which is the estimated time of the writing of the book of Daniel. However, they were probably part of the deportation that took place around 605<sub>B.C.</sub>

- Dan. 1—we read of Daniel rejecting to eat the king's food.
- Dan. 4—we read about Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams
- Dan 5—Daniel predicts the death of Belteshazzar
- Dan 6—we read of Daniel being promoted by Darius the Mede to the top presidential status

Imagine that, being brought out of slavery and coming into the kingdom. Darius saw that Daniel was different, and he sensed some kind of special excellent spirit from Daniel.

When Daniel was promoted, the plot begins to thicken.

Daniel 6:1: "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps, that they might be over the whole kingdom. And over them were three presidents (Daniel was one of them), so that these satraps might give account to them, and the king should not suffer loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the presidents and satraps because a surpassing spirit was in him. And the king was planning to set him over all the kingdom" (vs 1-3). *What an accomplishment, especially for a Jewish exile!*

However, people of faith are not always that popular, as we see:

Verse 4: "Then the presidents and rulers sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom. But they could find no occasion or fault because he was faithful. Neither was there any error or fault found in him."

As we look through the past, we can see that serving God has always been a costly battle in some ways. There were a lot of changes that took place when I decided to follow God.

- the Prophets were often jailed or stoned
- John the Baptist was jailed and beheaded
- Paul was jailed and stoned; eventually martyred
- all the apostles were martyred except for John who was exiled

In John 15 Jesus warned the disciples that they would be rejected by the world.

As I said, 'It's not a walk in the park!' Christians have for centuries—and continue today—to suffer for their faith. We're very fortunate—so far to this point in this nation--not always for those in the rest of the world: When your faith is tested by fire, will you hold up under the persecution.

Daniel's enemies searched for a flaw in him, but they didn't find any. What a credit to this faithful man. It kind of reminds of Pilate's conclusion about Jesus when he said, 'I find no fault in him.'

The only opening for Daniel's enemies was the fact that he was a man of faith. They're going to use that against him. He was a man of prayer, so they would find a way to prosecute him for praying.

Verse 5: "Then these men said, 'We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel unless we

find it against him concerning the Law of his God.”  
*Keeping the Law of God!*

It sounds like today where they want prayer, God, everything out of our public schools, our society, everything public! ***And eventually, they'll probably seek to keep it out of our own homes!***

Verse 6: “Then these presidents and rulers assembled to the king, and said this to him: ‘King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects, and the satraps, and the officials and governors, have consulted together that the king establish a statute, and to make a strong decree, **that whoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, except from you, O king, he shall be thrown into the den of lions.** Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which cannot be revoked” (vs 6-8).

Verse 9: “Therefore, King Darius signed the writing and the decree.”

This sounds like some of the garbage that we get out of Washington, D.C. for laws! They knew that Daniel would continue to petition God and this plot would sentence him to death.

But faith, when tested by fire always finds help in prayer. Notice Daniel’s response to the king’s decree:

Verse 10: “And when he had learned that the document was signed, Daniel went to his house. And his windows were open in his upper room toward Jerusalem; and he knelt on his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before.”

No change! Faith! Daniel was not about to stop his prayers to God and he continued to pray as before; nothing changed!

Notice the fact that he prayed with the windows opened. He didn’t pray in secret. He was not ashamed of God.

- Do we try and hide our faith from the public?
- or**
- Do we live in faith?

Of course, as expected, the king sentenced Daniel to the lion’s den. He signed the document, promised he would do it. It really gets interesting from here on.

Verse 16: “Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den.... [tested by fire] ...The king spoke and said to Daniel, **‘Your God, Whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.’**”

Isn’t that interesting, notice the king had confidence in Daniel’s prayers and believed that his God would deliver him?

Verse 18: “Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting....” *God did, indeed, protect Daniel from the lions!*

Verse 21: “Then Daniel said to the king, ‘O king, live forever. My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not hurt me because before Him innocency was found in me. And also before you, O king, I have done no harm” (vs 21-22). ***Daniel’s faith make him strong!***

We started off by defining faith as it was written in Heb. 11. It describes so many of the faithful. It explains what they all went through. I’m bring us to this point, because we’re facing some times we haven’t see in a long time, these last couple years. They don’t appear to be coming to a quick end. I don’t know what the future is going to bring, but we need to be prepared with faith.

Hebrews 11:33: “Who by faith were victorious over kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, shut *the* mouths of lions, quenched *the* fury of fire, escaped *the* edge of *the* sword, were strengthened from weakness, became mighty in war, *and* turned back the armies of foreigners. Women received their dead restored to life; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a superior resurrection; and others endured *the* trial of *cruel* mocking and scourging; yes, and moreover, of chains and imprisonment” (vs 33-36)—*Paul, Peter and others!*

Verse 37: “They were stoned to death, they were sawed in two, they were *brutally* interrogated, *and* slaughtered by *the* sword. They went about in sheepskins *and* in goatskins, being destitute, oppressed, *and* ill-treated; **of whom the world was not worthy;** they wandered in deserts and in mountains, *living* in caves and in holes in the earth” (vs 37-38)—*we’re not there, yet!*

- What is the bottom line here?
- Why am I talking?
- Why am I running my mouth?
- What should we be doing?

Hebrews 12:1: “Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps *us;* *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance, **having our minds fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of our faith;** Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross... [none of us have endured that] ...*although* He despised *the*



shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the Throne of God. **Now meditate deeply on Him Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds**” (vs 1-3).

Where does our faith go? *Our focus needs to be on Jesus Christ!*

Paul reminds us, v 4: **“You have not yet resisted to the point of losing blood in your struggle against sin.”**

I’m sure that some tough times are ahead and we are going to go through trials. We’re promised that we will deal with trials. We are going to be tested; tested by fire!

We need to be grateful and thankful today for all the blessings that God has poured out on us! We don’t know what the future brings. We can guess! Just like Job, all things could change rapidly tomorrow! Everything is temporary. We have been warned what it will be like as the end of this age approaches.

Go to Matt. 24, Deut. 28! Our faith will be tested by fire in this life! However, God has purpose in all things. Paul tells us:

Verse 11: “Now truly, no chastisement for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous... [our trials are not pleasant to endure] ...nevertheless, afterwards **it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it.**”

May God give us the strength to endure the trials! Some of us more severe than others! We need to keep the faith. **Without faith we do not have hope!**

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 11:1, 3
- 2) 1 Peter 1:3-6
- 3) Hebrews 13:8
- 4) 1 Peter 1:7-8
- 5) Hebrews 13:5
- 6) 2 Corinthians 12:9
- 7) Matthew 15:21-28
- 8) Jonah 2:2
- 9) Romans 3:23
- 10) Romans 6:23
- 11) Romans 5:8
- 12) Jonah 2:9-10
- 13) Job 1:1-3, 13-21
- 14) James 1:17
- 15) Daniel 5:23
- 16) Luke 20:46-47
- 17) Luke 21:1-4

- 18) Daniel 6:1-10, 16, 18, 21-22
- 19) Hebrews 11:33-38
- 20) Hebrews 12:1-4, 11

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 16:33
- Daniel 1; 4; 5
- John 15
- Matthew 24
- Deuteronomy 28

RK:bo  
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