

Sequences of Redemption #3

By “sequence”, I mean those scriptures where one thing leads to another, and then to another, etc. Previously, we looked at the sequence in Rom. 8:28-30: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Then we saw in Rom. 5:1-2 three conditions we now enjoy, between justification and glorification – peace with God, access to God through Christ, and a hopeful rejoicing.

Now we will look at another sequence that has to do with our here-and-now walk as pilgrims in this world.

The Testing and Proving of our Character and Faith through Trial

Rom. 5:3-5 – “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that **tribulation** worketh **patience**; and patience, **experience**; and experience, **hope**: and hope maketh **not ashamed** ...”

There are several Greek words that occur regularly in the verses referenced in this study.

- θλίψις (**thlipsis**) - to be pressed, or under pressure; used to describe affliction, oppression, distress, or tribulation
- πυρώσει (**purosei**) – a burning or refiner’s fire. Speaks of calamities that try the character. (**pur** = fire)
- πειρασμόν (**peirasmon**) – a proving (of character) by experiment, often through adversity, trials, or temptations.
- διώκω (**dioko**) – to put to flight or make to flee; to harass, trouble, molest, or persecute
- δοκίμιον (**dokimion**) – a trial to prove, or put something to the test to show authenticity. It can be used also of a smelting furnace (Prov. 27:21 in Septuagint Greek). (Verb is δοκιμάζω - **dokimadzo**)
- δοκιμή (**dokime**) - that which has been tried and put to a proof, a character that is shown to be approved by enduring through testing.
- ὑπομονή (**hupomone**) - steadfastness, constancy, perseverance or endurance; sometimes “a patient waiting for” (like Jesus’ return). (Verb is ὑπομένω - **hupomeno**)

➤ Tribulation

The Greek word for tribulation here is *thlipsis*. It includes all the pressures, afflictions, distresses, and tribulations of life, but can include persecution for the faith. This has been greater or lesser at various times and places of church history, but it should be seen as the normal result of our believing, not as some unusual and surprising thing, and not as a sign of God’s displeasure with us.

Ac. 14:22 – “... and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much **tribulation [thlipsis]** enter into the kingdom of God.” (spoken after Paul had been stoned in Lystra and left for dead)

1 P. 4:12 – “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the **fiery [purosei] trial [peirasmon]** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory is revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” The purifying fires of persecution not only refine individuals, but the church as a whole (it tends to weed out those who are not serious).

Because we in 20th century America have experienced a time of relative peace and freedom from severe persecution, we may tend to think that is normal, but really it is not. 2 Tim. 3:12 – “Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer **persecution [dioko]**.” (after describing the persecutions he endured at Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe)

These persecutions should not be seen as purely negative – they are in some sense a gift, and can tend to our good, if we respond properly to them.

Phl. 1:29 – “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

1 P. 1:6-9 – “... ye are in heaviness through manifold **temptations [peirasmōis]**: That the **trial [dokimion]** of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it **be tried [dokimadzo]** with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 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.” We suffer various adversities to prove our character and the genuineness of our faith. Better now than later.

In truth, the reason Christians are persecuted is because we bear the name of Christ – we bear the suffering that he would get if he were still physically present on earth. We are suffering “for his sake”. Unbelievers hate God and Christ, and therefore they hate us. Jn. 15:18-21

➤ **Patience (endurance)**

The Greek word translated as patience in the KJV is *hupomone*. This means that the KJV word “patience” is often better understood as “endurance”. You are patient when your child keeps asking “Why?”, or your aging mother asks the same question 5 times, but you endure by refusing to give in to temptation, weariness, or threat.

One direct result of persecution is that we develop endurance. Jas. 1:2-4 – “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers **temptations [peirasmōs]**; Knowing this, that **the trying [dokimion] of your faith worketh patience [hupomone]**. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

➤ **Experience (proven character)**

The Greek word for experience here is *dokime(n)* – character proven by testing.

A new Christian is all faith and enthusiasm and no experience. It is easy to say “I believe and will never fall away”, but another to live it day by day. That is why there is such a discrepancy between the number of “converts” and the number who stick with it to the end, through thick and thin. In marriage, the ties between man and wife are developed and strengthened by the things they go through together. At first they have good intentions and much emotional determination, but that is not the same as working through the difficulties of life together. It is the same with our Christian walk. It is by enduring through trials and everyday living that we develop a strong and living faith in God. There are no shortcuts. Our experiences are what give our testimonies credibility.

➤ **Hope**

Our hope is of an eternal home with God and the saints and angels in heaven. 1 Cor. 15:19 – “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” We believe on him who we have not seen, to the saving of our souls. Like Abraham, we are looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Jas. 1:12 – “Blessed is the man that **endureth [hupomeno] temptation [peirasmōs]**: for when he is **tried [dokimos]**, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” The Greek then means to endure or persevere through the difficulties and adversities which serve to test and prove us. This testing can be in the form of temptation (to sin), but would probably be better here as the more general “trial”, which would include temptation.

➤ **Confidence (not ashamed)**

We are not ashamed of this hope, though some accuse us of “pie in the sky” thinking. He that believeth shall not be confounded (put to shame). We should no longer fear death and the final judgment. Our confidence is not in the flesh (our own efforts or goodness), but the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us who believe on him.